

Editorial: planning theory and the planning discipline

Article

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Editorial: Planning Theory and the planning discipline

The current challenging times give us occasion to pause and consider. In particular, the extent to which our personal well-being and the well-being of our loved ones may be built upon ecosystems that are fundamentally social and environmental in nature has been highlighted by many, including those in the planning profession (Ihnji, 2020).

In a recent Editorial Board meeting of this journal, issues such as the rise of populism, the increase of natural disasters around the world, the Black Lives Matter movement and the increasing critique of planning in some contexts were highlighted as current issues that this journal must respond to. One might also add migration (international and intranational), the rise of 'fake news', an eroding sense of the common good, the list could continue I am sure. There is thus no doubt that we are living through challenging times, where the intensity of the different issues we confront may be more or less dependent on where we live, but they all form a part of a horizon of shared experience in today's interconnected world and are therefore part of our wider context. How does, or should, a journal like Planning Theory then contribute to addressing some of the above concerns?

Planning as many have argued and most would agree is a practice discipline. Development of concepts and theories that may be far removed from direct sensory experience is one of the key tasks of any discipline. These concepts in turn form the means for the development of a discipline as a 'scientific' enterprise, the mechanism through which it develops 'thinking traditions' to make sense of new horizons and new perspectives (Chettiparamb, 2007). However, to what extent is an applied domain such as planning a 'discipline' in the above sense? Dogan and Pahre (1990) problematises this for social sciences more generally when they argue that in the case of the social sciences many disciplines do not have a very strong core. Sub-disciplines are grouped together mainly because the people working in them have a "residual feeling of common identity" (p. 84). This could be claimed to be particularly true for the planning sub-discipline which, besides epistemic traditions, also tends to be organized around different problems, thus laying claim to be a practice-discipline.

Disciplines also need an organizational manifestation to create "a heightened sense of autonomy, definitiveness and stability" (Aram, 2004, p.381). Planning presents a bit of a mixed picture here too, for while at times staking out independently, often it is found within diverse disciplinary domains including architecture, geography, engineering, business studies and so on. Thus different priorities emerging from the immediate organizational context can create tensions. It can also spur 'hybrid spaces' which, as argued by Dogan and Pahre (1990), are often sites of innovation. So if planning is essentially a discipline without a strong core, which is problem driven and is organizationally susceptible to diverse disciplinary pressures, what exactly is the role of a journal such as Planning Theory?

Clarke back in 1983 noted that "the discipline (or profession) is also comprehensive in that it does not specialise by locality but rather pulls together a craftlike community of interest that reaches across large territories" (p. 29). I often think of planning as such a 'craftlike community of interest' that spans across wide geographical differences, but nevertheless

share an endemic culture, a *techne*. A journal such as *Planning Theory* facilitates the development of this craftlike community by clarifying ideas, promoting dialogue on ideas and enabling an advocacy of ideas. This is done through close scrutiny of historic assumptions that have guided planning; critiques of ideas that shape contemporary planning practice; reflections on global and more regional happenings and the response of planning; examination of planning practice around the world to unravel underpinning assumptions; normative arguments for better ways of conducting planning and better ways of being a planner. It is imperative that these are cognizant of the realities and challenges of a changing world, where the lessons of our time are captured so that they can be internalized, and reflected upon. Problems can then be understood better and planning interventions can be more effective as a consequence.

To reach a diverse audience and promote critical engagement and reflexivity, *Planning Theory* has now commenced a new format - 'Planning Theory Podcasts'. Prof. Yvonne Rydin will be the new PT Podcast Editor. The podcasts will start by organizing author colloquiums – discussions that focus on the life time contribution of one author to the discipline of planning, followed by a response from the said author. It will also organize discussions around special issues published in *Planning Theory*, to promote key thematic discussions within the planning community. The podcasts thus become the newest addition to the different ways in which academics can contribute to, and engage with, the journal. Besides original articles, these already include Book Reviews, managed by Dr Stephen Wood; Essays, currently managed by the Managing Editor; Review articles, managed by Dr Lucie Laurian; and the Comments section, managed by Prof Stephen Moroni. *Planning Theory* is also open to Special Issue proposals, which are co-managed by Prof. Bish Sanyal and Prof. Vanessa Watson. We welcome our readers to get in touch with me as Managing Editor or any of the Editors listed above for specific types of contributions.

Planning Theory cannot exist without the generous and magnanimous support of our reviewers. We are very grateful for their time and diligence through the review process. The reviewers for 2019 were Alex Abiko, Hazem Abu-Orf, Annika Agger, Ernest Alexander, Nurit Alfasi, Rachelle Alterman, Francesca Ansaloni, Joseph Ayitio, Ela Babalik-Sutcliffe, Jane Ball, Tridib Banerjee, Claudia Basta, Robert Beauregard, Simon Bell, Gautum Bhan, Philip Black, Denis Bocquet, Branden Born, Michael Buser, Jonas Bylund, Pia Bäcklund, Kang Cao, Robin Chang, John M Cobin, Jason Corburn, Stefano Cozzolino, Austin Cummings, Alexander Cuthbert, Allan Dale, Benjamin Davy, Alex Deffner, Feng Deng, Marc Doussard, Martijn Duineveld, Pedro de Novais, Geraint Ellis, Michael odei erdiaw-kwasie, Susan Fainstein, Mona Fawaz, Antonio Ferreira, Andrew Flynn, John Forester, Claire Freeman, Daniel Galland, Matthew Gandy, Amir Ganjavie, Lasse Gerrits, Judy Gillespie, Zakina Gligorijevic, Peter Gordon, Kristina Grange, Steven Griggs, Marius Gronning, Michael Gunder, Rajan Gurukkal, Philippe Hamman, Andreas Hengstermann, John Henneberry, Jean Hillier, Charles Hoch, Randall Holcombe, Lewis Hopkins, Philipp Horn, Donna Houston, Marie Huchzermeyer, Andy Inch, Yosef Jabareen, Ihnji Jon, Martin Jones, Vesa Kanninen, Nikhil Kaza, Jennifer Kent, Mari Kågström, Lawrence WC Lai, Wang Lan, John Landis, Martin Larbi, Coenen Lars, Lucie Laurian, Crystal Legacy, Helena Leino, Laura Lieto, Francesco Lo Piccolo, Alex Lord, Diana MacCallum, Christine Mady, Claudio Magalhaes, Christopher Maidment, Steve Marotta, Agustina Martire, Hanna Mattila, Katie McClymont, Abid Mehmood, Jonathan Metzger, Stefano Moroni, Frank Moulart, Garth Myers, Raine Juhani Mäntysalo, Zorica Nedovic-Budic, Eoin O'Neill, Franklin

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Prof. Angelique Chettiparamb
Managing Editor
Planning Theory.

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