

## Call for Papers for Planning Theory Special Issue

### Simplifying narratives of power: ideology, discourse and planning

The concept of ideology has a complex genealogy. This extends from its earliest positivist Enlightenment incarnation as the ‘scientific study of ideas’ which was developed to “extricate human thought from the grip of ‘phantoms’” (MacKenzie, 1994: 3), through to its more recent post-positivist incarnation in which it conceals and simultaneously reproduces the semantic and phantasmagorical indeterminacy of the political world (Žižek, 1989).

Indeed, Eagleton (2007) identifies six different meanings of the concept which may here be simplified to three: the general production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life (an understanding which approaches the broader concept of ‘culture’); the mobilisation of ideas, beliefs and values in the promotion and legitimisation of sectoral interests against opposing interests; and a third more pejorative form in which ideas, beliefs and values are mobilised to legitimise powerful interests through distortion and misrepresentation.

Given this variety of ideology ‘in the abstract’, and the truism that ‘planning is political’, it is by no means surprising that there are many different incarnations of the concept of ideology which manifest in the planning literature. The concept of ideology has been employed in both pejorative and positive terms to discuss various issues, including:

- the problem of incoherence and fragmentation of meaning in planning (Foley, 1960; Guttenberg, 2009; McAuslan, 1980);
- the need for planning to establish its own rationale and meaning (Fagence, 1983; Foley, 1960);
- the challenges to planning achieving its own rationale due to inherent instability of meaning (Reade, 1983; Stead and Meijers, 2009; Taylor, 2003) and structural contradictions (Harvey, 1985);
- the psycho-social ambiguity of concepts central to planning which can serve to legitimise the neoliberal status quo (Gunder, 2010; Gunder and Hillier, 2009);
- the need to expose and engage in pluralism through open and rational communication resulting in consensus (Coaffee & Healey, 2003; Healey, 1997, 2003);
- the apparent domination of neoliberalism over planning thought and practice through the totalitarianism of consensus (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010, 2012; Purcell, 2009),
- the effects of political ideology on changing planning ideas and practices (Thornley, 1992) and;
- the variation in cultural expressions of planning practice across space and time (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009; Sanyal, 2005) and the politics of their transformations (Grange, 2014).

As with ideology ‘in the abstract’, treatments of ideology in the planning literature are united by a common acceptance that ideas, concepts, the ideologies they comprise, and the discourses through which they find agency matter, and that they matter because they have the power to shape the terms by which political and social reality is understood, and shaped through planning practice.

The variety of ways in which the concept of ideology has been used in the planning literature, however, suggests both its strength and weakness as an analytical tool. On the one hand, it highlights that the concept of ideology in its various forms can be a powerful tool to help us understand the political nature of planning. On the other hand, mirroring Wildavsky’s (1973) famous critique of planning, it also suggests ideology could come perilously close to being everything and therefore nothing.

This special issue of *Planning Theory* starts from the premise that the significant analytical potential of the concept of ideology for planning thinking can only be realised if its role is brought to the fore of analysis. We also note, however, that ideology has rarely been subject to sustained critical reflection within planning and that there have been very few attempts to provide an overview of this terrain or to identify potential new directions for scholarship. We therefore invite contributions exploring the

intersections of planning thought and practice with various approaches to ideology, seeking to bring together a range of papers that use the concept to cast light on different facets of the complex relationships between planning, politics and society.

Key questions which could be considered include:

- How can the underlying relationship between ideology and planning be understood?
- Why has this relationship proven so fraught and contested through much of the history of planning?
- Do different theoretical approaches to the concept of ideology and its analysis (Marxist; post-Marxist; Foucauldian; Lacanian; Freedman's conceptual method etc.) offer more or less promising means of understanding this relationship and the politics of planning?
- How can different approaches to ideology enhance understanding of the contemporary historical conjuncture and its implications for planning ideas and practices?
- How can we understand the mediated relations between ideology, planning and the production of space?
- Is there an ideology of planning today (Harvey, 1985)?

We are interested in reports on 'ideology in action' from planning case studies, alongside or integrated with the broader or more theoretical issues highlighted in the questions above. We hope that these might come from a range of different contexts and planning challenges, giving a broad palette from which to start to progress thinking on this under-analysed field.

In addressing these questions the Special Issue will seek to critically survey the current state of the concept of ideology as it relates to planning theory, policy and practice across a variety of geographical contexts and advance debates about its analytical value from a variety of different but related theoretical positions. Contributions from the Global South are especially welcome.

Please send 500-word abstracts to Edward Shepherd (edward.shepherd@reading.ac.uk) by the **20th of October, 2017**. Authors will be notified of provisional acceptance by the Special Issue editors (Edward Shepherd, Tim Marshall and Andy Inch) by the end of October with formal confirmation of the abstracts from *Planning Theory* in January 2018. The Special Issue editors will hold a symposium in April 2018 as a means of discussing draft contributions with submission of papers expected by June 2018.

Please take the time to read the Special Issue guidelines for *Planning Theory* so that you are aware of the process, in particular the requirement for normal peer review: [http://journals.sagepub.com/pb-assets/cmscontent/PLT/Guidelines\\_for\\_proposals\\_for\\_Special\\_issues\\_in\\_Planning\\_Theory.pdf](http://journals.sagepub.com/pb-assets/cmscontent/PLT/Guidelines_for_proposals_for_Special_issues_in_Planning_Theory.pdf)

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