

EDITORIAL PREFACE

Planning Theory for Urban e-Planning: A Discussion

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The International Journal of E-Planning Research (IJEPR) publishes, as stated in its editorial policy, on four major areas of research and practice in urban and regional planning: i) theory, history and ethics of e-planning; ii) organization, technology and methods; iii) functional dimensions of e-planning; and iv) future directions for e-Planning. Different topics are expected to be explored and discussed in regular and in theme issues within these four major areas. With this issue, the IJEPR publishes, for the first time, an issue entirely focused on the first of these four main areas – ‘Theory, history and ethics of e-Planning’ –, exploring the theme ‘planning theory’ from different perspectives and its implications for urban e-planning. This issue comprises two invited articles, the first by Professor Emeritus Ernest R. Alexander, from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, on the relation between Planning and E-Planning, and implications for theory, education and practice, and the second by Professor Emeritus Pierre Clavel, from Cornell University, on ‘Speaking Truth to Power’, and three double-blind peer-reviewed research articles, the first by Vanessa

Watson, the second by Raine Mäntysalo and Karoliina Jarenko, and the last one by Stefano Moroni and Francesco Chiodelli. This issue includes also a commissioned conference note and two book-reviews.

In the first of these two invited articles, ‘*Planning or E-Planning? Implications for Theory, Education and Practice*’, Ernest R. Alexander discusses the relevance of Planning Theory and its implications for E-Planning as a distinct planning practice and education. Starting from the idea that there are only planning practices and not planning without a referent, Ernest Alexander argues that planning theory to be meaningful requires contingent and contextual referents, being Urban/Spatial E-Planning one such planning practice for which planning theory may be relevant. In the following article ‘*Speaking Truth to Power*’, Pierre Clavel examines and discusses how city planners have sought to speak truth to power based on an example set in the 1980s and 1990s in Chicago. The story of this alternative, coalition approach that prevailed over a period of years may be a symbol for the present and may prove useful

for contemporary e-planners faced as they are with power in their daily activities. Despite the possibilities that e-planning can offer, compared to conventional urban planning, it is important to keep in mind that the ‘old’ issues, namely the always present power issues, with which the urban planning process is confronted, remain as relevant as ever and, for that reason, researchers and practitioners in the field of urban e-planning need to take it into consideration, as these two articles, in different ways, rightly exemplify.

The following three research articles explore three different themes. Vanessa Watson, in “*The Case for a Southern Perspective in Planning Theory*”, discusses the value of “theoretical positions which claim general and global applicability, yet are grounded on assumptions about social and material conditions which are more specific to a global North context” and offers new explanatory and normative theory that openly focus the problems and issues of cities in the global South, a perspective that will certainly be inspiring for all those engaged in Urban e-Planning in those cities and countries. In “*Communicative Planning Theory Following Deliberative Democracy Theory: Critical Pragmatism and the Trading Zone Concept*” Raine Mäntysalo and Karoliina Jarenko review the development of communicative planning theory in relation to deliberative democracy theory, in each of its three generations, and the changes in the consensus goal associated with it, discussing how this impacted in the communicative planning theory, exploring in this context the concept of trading zone. These important theoretical developments, examined and discussed by Raine Mäntysalo and Karoliina Jarenko, are particularly relevant for Urban e-Planning, since a deeper citizen engagement in the urban planning process than that seen in conventional urban planning, allowed and favored by the extensive use of information and communication technologies, appears to be one of distinctive characteristics of e-planning. Stefano Moroni and Francesco Chiodelli discuss, in the article titled “*Public Spaces, Private Spaces, and the Right to the City*”, two arguments that had a significant

influence on the development of the theory and practice of urban planning in recent years. The first argument suggests that public space is what characterises the city; in other words, the right to the city is primarily a claim on public space; the second of these two arguments proposes that public space is crucial because it provides the physical support for public interaction and political debate. However, the discussion the authors offer suggests, first that private spaces have also been determinant to what the city is, and, secondly, that the public sphere does not exist exclusively in public spaces, as shown by the Internet, a perspective that suggests a more balanced view of urban spaces and one that urban e-planners ought to consider since virtual environments open and offer a whole new range of possibilities.

This issue of the International Journal of E-Planning Research dedicated to planning theory includes also a conference report by Dean J. Saitta on the “*The Society for American City and Regional Planning History (SACRPH) Biennial Conference, 2013*”, and the review of “*New Approaches to Urban Planning. Insights from Participatory Communities*”, by Łukasz Damurski.

We trust these articles and review will add new insights in the field of Urban Planning Theory and will hopefully contribute for the development of a more theoretically informed Urban e-Planning. The IJEPR will publish again on Planning Theory in the following issues of 2014. We aim to bring together different perspectives and theoretical insights and to stimulate a fruitful discussion on how they relate to e-Planning, and on their implications for e-Planning practice, education and ethics. More than answers, we expect these papers on planning theory and ethics will contribute to the discussion of the foundations of this emerging urban planning practice.

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