Unpacking the political and normative ideas behind planning

Planning Theory and Practice Journal in Focus

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Unlike perhaps any other social science disciplines, planning is inherently both a normative and an empirical exercise.

In fact, the activity of planning is premised on the notion that a future can be cultivated that will be better than the one that would have arisen in the absence of planning – otherwise, to plan would be pointless.

The latest edition of *Planning Theory & Practice* reminds us that this dual aspect of planning raises important challenges at both conceptual and practical levels.

For instance, how to transform knowledge claims about major renewable energy infrastructure into recommendations and regulatory decisions (see Prof Yvonne Rydin); how to translate normative ideas about healthy, liveable communities into actual integrated planning policies (see Lowe et al.); how to go beyond prescriptive psychological

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barriers holding back the use of automated vehicles (see Guerra and Morris).

Most importantly, perhaps, both Hatuka et al.'s article on the *Political Premises of Urban Concepts* and Bates et al.'s *Interface – What Shakes Loose When We Imagine Otherwise* – remind us that all planning frameworks, ideas and policies are based on different assumptions and distinct sets of values and visions.

Hence the need to unpack the premises and driving forces of planning concepts that we take for granted and to consider the possibility of planning in ways that counter, elide and/or dismantle dominant perspectives if we want to call the status quo into question and create new 'spatial imaginaries'.