

CALL FOR PAPERS

THE RETURN OF ECONOMIC PLANNING

The left think tank Economic and Social Research Aotearoa, with kind support from the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, invites contributions to a three day international conference on the question of economic planning, Auckland 21–23 February 2018.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS

Elham Bahmanteymouri

Lecturer in Architecture and Planning at the University of Auckland.

Endnotes

A collective based in Germany, the UK and the USA (endnotes.org.uk).

George Ciccariello-Maher

Author of *Building the Commune* and *Decolonizing Dialectics*.

Stefano Harney

Co-author of *The Undercommons: Fugitive Study and Black Planning*.

The conference will bring together scholars and activists to deepen strategic thinking and articulate a vision for radical economic and social transformation. The purpose of the conference will be to put economic planning back on the agenda, to build connections and develop collective projects, and to assemble possible further directions for research and political interventions in economic planning. Among the concrete results of the conference will be the publication of an edited book collecting contributions from leading international thinkers that will stake out the relationship between economic planning and political strategy moving forward. This call for papers sketches the importance of economic planning for interventions against and beyond capitalism and invites contributions to the conference.

BACKGROUND

In most contemporary radical political theory and practice, economic planning has largely been off the agenda. Instead we have seen a focus on forms of radical politics which tend to be oriented around localism, recoiling from planning because of the experiences of the past, and failing to imagine real international challenges to the hegemony of capitalism. A key ideological and strategic limit which encourages this localism is the tendency to accept the ideological assumption, so ingeniously conceived in liberalism from Locke through Hayek, that large scale planning of economic life is not viable because of supposed limits on the human capacity to purposefully plan and organise the economy, production and distribution.

Despite the hegemony these ideological assumptions have achieved, the past two decades have seen a remarkable expansion of economic planning across the global capitalist economy. The official bastions of free capitalist markets have given themselves over to the rescue and planning of the economy, with trillions of dollars of rescue packages and then further trillions of quantitative easing across Europe and the United States. State planned protection of intellectual and other private property rights continues to be expanded through multilateral international investment agreements. The practical world of business has likewise exhibited a remarkable rise in its deployment of planning, as can be seen in corporate strategy, the proliferation of risk management techniques, information systems, and the fields of shipping and logistics. All of this bears witness to detailed planning

to a degree never before seen. In short, the capitalist economy has never before been subjected to such extensive and intensive planning.

The supposed limits on planning are also radically called into question by contemporary scientific and technological developments. Contemporary climate science presents an important example of the rise of complex forms of modelling and computation which have led climate scientists to put forward global plans for the radical decarbonisation of economic production, exposing the environmental necessity for global forms of economic planning. Indeed, the deployment of contemporary computing power has radically extended capacities for compilation of information and anticipation of futures. While such scientific and technological developments remain profoundly limited under present economic logics, they at the same time present a remarkable challenge in terms of the reality of renewed capacities for comprehension and planning of production and distribution.

The return of economic planning sits waiting on the horizon of contemporary radical theory and strategy, and requires a turn from the question of how movements and organisations can and should be planned internally, to how they can strategically orient themselves around the future of economic planning. Such a turn is closely connected to recent calls to move from localism and ‘folk politics’ to rethinking and revitalising more ambitious forms, strategies, and imaginaries. The conference will articulate new responses to twentieth century objections to economic planning, given that these

objections do not hold in light of scientific and technological developments and the degree of planning seen in the contemporary global capitalist economy. When economic planning has become the norm in contemporary capitalism and when the contradictions of ideological and practical opposition to planning are irreparable, the question is no longer whether to plan the economy or not, but how to plan and to what ends.

THEMES

We invite contributions on any aspect of economic planning. This might involve, but would not be restricted to:

- Theoretical considerations of the nature of planning
- Historical studies of the vicissitudes of planning
- Empirical studies of local or national economic planning
- Concrete proposals
- Analyses of planning as used in contemporary enterprise
- Economic planning and the planning of space
- Contemporary developments in the sciences relevant to economic planning
- Consequences of the anthropocene for economic planning
- Contemporary and future technologies and economic planning
- Logistics and counterlogistics
- Experiments in collective planning
- Planning in indigenous struggle
- Economic planning and political organisation
- Workers, class, and economic planning

OUTPUTS

The conference will result in the publication of an edited book, *The Return of Economic Planning*, which will lay out the conceptual and political grounds at stake in the contemporary return of economic planning. Following the conference ESRA will locally publish a series of contributions that offer concrete proposals for economic planning in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

SUBMISSIONS

Contributors wishing to speak at the conference are invited to submit an abstract outline of their talk. This abstract should clearly indicate the content and focus of the talk and be clear about the contribution of the paper that would be presented at the conference. Speakers will be in one plenary session, rather than in streams. Contributors should expect to speak for 20 minutes. Submissions will therefore be scrutinised for quality and contribution to the spirit of the conference.

Submissions are due 30 September 2017 and should be submitted as a Word file attachment. Notification of acceptance will be made by mid October 2017 and all presenters are expected to prepare a full written paper in advance of presenting their work at the conference.

CORRESPONDENCE

The conference will be hosted by the Economic Planning Inquiry Group at ESRA. Please direct any inquiries to Campbell Jones and Jonathan King at planning@esra.nz.