

## PROGRAMME

# THE RETURN OF ECONOMIC PLANNING

This conference brings together scholars and activists 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.

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The conference is taking place at Point Chevalier Sailing Club, Raymond St, Point Chevalier, Auckland.

Morning tea, afternoon tea, and lunch will be provided. Bring swimwear and a towel if you'd like to swim at the beach, and on Thursday evening we'll have a BBQ and drinks.

The full programme and abstracts follow.

### WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY

10:30 AM Registration, tea and coffee

11:00 AM Opening  
– ESRA and Organise Aotearoa

11:15 AM The Administration of Things  
– Endnotes

12:45 PM Lunch

1:45 PM The Neoliberal Fantasy  
– Elham Bahmanteymouri

The Sweetness of Commerce  
and the Virtue of Ignorance:  
Neoliberalism and Economic  
Planning  
– Jessica Whyte

3:15 PM Afternoon tea

3:45 PM The Neoliberalisation of  
Planning  
– Mohsen Mohammadzadeh

The Subject Supposed to Plan  
– Campbell Jones

5:15 PM Closing

5:30 PM Picnic at Point Chevalier beach  
(weather dependent)

**THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY**

8:30 AM	Registration, tea and coffee
9:00 AM	Logistics as Loss – Stefano Harney
10:30 AM	Morning tea
11:00 AM	Good Isn't Good Enough: the Role of Ethics in Economic Planning – Claire Parfitt
	A Dialectics of Planning and the Politics of Afro-futurism – Anisha Sankar and Nate Rew
12:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM	New Forms of the Economic Calculation Mechanism – James Roberts
	The Inherent Tensions of Democratic Economic Planning – Simon Tremblay-Pepin
3:00 PM	Afternoon tea
3:30 PM	Money and Planning – Jonathan King
	Logistics, Insurrection, Planning – Nathalie Jaques
5:00 PM	Closing
5:30 PM	BBQ, and drinks at the venue

**FRIDAY 23 FEBRUARY**

10:30 AM	Registration, tea and coffee
11:00 AM	Planning from Below: Building Communal Power in Venezuela – George Ciccariello-Maher
12:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM	Tino Rangatiratanga Against Capitalism – Teanau Tuiono
	Te Tiriti, Indigenous Rights and the Environment – Marama Davidson
3:00 PM	Afternoon tea
3:30 PM	Planning Universal Access to Cheap Luxury Public Housing – Shane Malva
	Praxis and Programme: Planning for a Planned Economy – Organise Aotearoa
5:00 PM	Closing

A full list of abstracts follows.

**THE ADMINISTRATION OF THINGS**

In thinking about the end of capitalism it is useful to return to the question of its agrarian origins. How might human beings reconnect to their capacity for self-creation in a natural environment transformed by the mediations of money, capital and the nation state? Does the 19th century program of abolishing the division between town and country still make

sense in a world that will soon be 70% urban? To make common the surface of the earth, to tear down the walls and fences, would be an epic task of coordination. It could no more be entrusted to some vacuously metaphysical spontaneity than to a single monolithic plan for everything. In this presentation we sketch out a few principles and offer some speculations about the infrastructure of communism.

— Endnotes

#### **THE NEOLIBERAL FANTASY**

The planning discipline emerged with the modern era to adjust the market economy's failures. In this manner, planning has had to undertake a paradoxical role. While planning aims for a just distribution of wealth, it should allocate resources to maximise the productivity of the economy. However, with the rise of neoliberalism the perspective about the role and function of planning in relation to the market operation and its failures has been radically changed. Hayek criticised planning as government economic control that is at the root of dictatorship and totalitarianism. Whereas he argued that in a liberal economy the market as an autocorrecting mechanism automatically provides well-being for individuals and society.

Although the neoliberal ideology promised to bring freedom and well-being, in reality neoliberalism has been operating through geographic displacement of economic crises, uneven development, and off shoring industries and manufacturing to deprive

and control labour and to diminish the cost of labour. Despite all the failures of neoliberalism, this ideology still continued to work as the hegemonic ideology.

This paper reveals that neoliberalism maintains itself through the deployment of different forms of fantasies to disavow its failures. Fantasies disavow these failures by providing an image of fullness, wholeness, or harmony for subjects. The paper explains that the main fantasy that has assisted neoliberalism to disavow its failures is the fantasy of the free competitive market. This fantasy of neoliberalism has been presented as an infallible solution in the case of any economic crisis and market failures.

— Elham Bahmanteymouri

#### **THE SWEETNESS OF COMMERCE AND THE VIRTUE OF IGNORANCE: NEOLIBERALISM AND ECONOMIC PLANNING**

In his classic 1977 book *The Passions and the Interests*, Albert Hirschman identified a distinctive argument for the 'civilizing' effects of the market. On Hirschman's telling, the thesis that commerce was a source of "sweetness, softness, calm and gentleness" (*douceur*) appealed to seventeenth-century Europeans who longed to be free of warring passions. Of course, such claims never accorded with the realities of early capitalism, hence the mockery to which Karl Marx subjected it in his writings on the "primitive accumulation" of capital. After describing in garish detail the history of Dutch colonialism, with its secret prisons, assassinations, bribery,

and enslavement, he remarked sarcastically, “[t]hat is peaceful [*doux*] commerce!” On Hirschman’s telling, it was only in the wake of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the social dislocation of the industrial revolution that the thesis was eclipsed by anxieties that, far from promoting morality and ‘civilization’, the market was undermining moral virtues and producing widespread anomie, atomization and class conflict. By the twentieth-century, he concluded, no observer could still subscribe to this hopeful vision of the market. This paper shows, in contrast, that, in the inauspicious circumstances of the early twentieth-century, neoliberalism was founded on an attempt to revive the argument that an unrestrained competitive market would replace violence, and coercive colonial rule with peaceful, mutually-beneficial, non-discriminatory, voluntary relations. Nonetheless, in assessing the modification that figures such as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and James Buchanan introduced into the original ‘sweetness of commerce’ thesis, I suggest that their adversary is of the utmost importance. No longer was their aim to prevent religious wars or to constrain rapacious feudal conflicts. Rather, in their attempt to combat the prestige of socialist planning, the neoliberals introduced an unusual addition to the political virtues fostered by the market: ignorance.

— Jessica Whyte

#### **THE NEOLIBERALISATION OF PLANNING**

This paper investigates how neoliberalism has attenuated planning by diminishing economic

planning at both national and regional levels. I explain how neoliberalised planning has been used as a tool for the further accumulation of wealth in neoliberalised cities. Foucault argued that planning initially was invented by the modern state as a controlling tool to regulate urban space, and to mitigate the side effects of rapid urbanisation during industrial capitalism. Following the Great Economic Crisis in the 1920s, Keynes suggested that the capitalist state should intervene in the market by the deployment of economic planning to address its failures. The implementation of economic planning aimed to distribute wealth in both cities and regions. Since the late 1970s, neoliberalism has transformed industrial capitalism into a new form of capitalism embedded in the finance sector and the real estate market, at least in the developed countries including New Zealand. The new form of capitalism has reinforced the pre-existing role of the major cities as the places of the accumulation of capital and people in which their economic growth relies on the constant flows of capital and people. Planning as a discipline has been consequently neoliberalised through the replacement of economic planning, including regional and national planning, with new sets of knowledge such as urban design. I argue that the neoliberalisation of planning is a component of the neoliberal political project that aims to sustain the flows of people and capital to the major cities by increasing spatial inequality and uneven development.

— Mohsen Mohammadzadeh

### **THE SUBJECT SUPPOSED TO PLAN**

This paper first of all debunks the presupposition that planning brings with it a ‘planner’ in the sense of an individual mind or consciousness. The reduction of planning to the thought of the individual is a fundamental premise of Hayek’s critique of planning. Overcoming this critique of the capacities of the individual to plan, which Hayek ingeniously extracted from classical liberalism, will not be achieved by bluntly asserting the ability of any particular individual to plan for others. Rather, any return to economic planning must firmly locate planning in collective deliberation and collective agents, while knowing that the capitalist market is only one particular form of collective deliberation. In such a context, the formal maxim that the subject is not reducible to the individual forms the ground for the definitive rebuttal of Hayek and all of his progeny, while also laying the ground for a radically renewed left planning.

— Campbell Jones

### **LOGISTICS AS LOSS**

One aspect of any renewed economic planning that would have to be rethought is logistics. Logistics may be understood as the science of loss in two ways. First it is field of study dedicated to extraction without devaluation. Second it may be understood - in its register as a capitalist science - as the degradation of means, or in other words, the loss of capacity of means. Indeed logistics is bound to a science of man as independent that is itself unsustainable. The entrepreneur and investor

are the latest versions of this geocidal and genocidal fantasy of the sovereign subject, of the self-made man, the settler. Rather than a counter-logistics still trapped within this logic, this talk will argue for taking up the logisticality of the anti-colonial and black radical traditions. This capacity to find each other and to pass along what we need will be explored using several examples from these traditions.

— Stefano Harney

### **GOOD ISN’T GOOD ENOUGH: THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN ECONOMIC PLANNING**

This paper will raise questions about the foundations of radical economic and social planning to inform how we might approach planning. In particular, the paper will draw on the author’s doctoral research, which takes a critical perspective on the role of ethics in contemporary finance, set against the ways in which ethics have been mobilised throughout the history of capitalist development.

Ethics are consistently mobilised as a means to resolve social and political tensions. The particular ways in which this occurs reveal elements of the social relations underlying these dynamics.

Questions of ethics and values (both sociological/anthropological and economic) will be crucial to radical planning, as they are to planning as it currently operates. Radical politics, especially Marxism, often avoids questions of ethics. This paper argues that such questions are significant and cannot

be ignored, but equally that bald moral arguments are an insufficient basis for public policy. A materialist understanding of ethics should inform debates about how to assess and prioritise economic plans.

— Claire Parfitt

### **A DIALECTICS OF PLANNING AND THE POLITICS OF AFRO-FUTURISM**

To plan economies in synchronicity with postcolonial and decolonial aims, clear expectations must be established as to the grounds of their reconciliation. This paper introduces the question of the nature of a planning which is consistent with postcolonial and decolonial politics. Thus the psycho-social demands of postcoloniality must be examined with the intention of establishing a case for its convergence with a dialectics of planning, an endeavor to think the future now. The radical dialectical tradition holds the capacity for a redemptive postcolonial politics, through which the possibility for a new economic planning may be established. Emphasizing the redemptive thread of Afro-futurism, this paper examines its importance to a post-colonial politics. The Messianic and temporally disruptive depictions of Afro-futurism are culturally rich and philosophically informed. Its capacity to articulate numerous possible futures is an exercise in imaginative planning that directly addresses historical trauma and postcolonial experience. The question remains then as to the lessons which can be derived from this reorientation of political memory? It is of critical importance to prioritize counter-history and its dialectical implications if

there is any case to be made for economic planning that can do justice to the postcolonial condition. This paper first moves to articulate a dialectics of planning, before examining the ways in which afro-futurism embodies this. Finally, we engage with how this should influence economic planning today and in the future.

— Anisha Sankar and Nate Rew

### **NEW FORMS OF THE ECONOMIC CALCULATION MECHANISM**

The economic calculation mechanism, fulfilled by the price mechanism and market under capitalism, operates at the centre of any economic system. Within socialist and communist experimentation two major schools dominate, those who postulate the ex-post market arrangement as the only feasible economic arrangement, and those experimenting with the ex-ante, forecasting, and predictive methods of economic planning. The twentieth century's addiction to the former has barred the rigorous investigation into the latter, namely new conscious mechanisms of calculation.

This paper discusses the potential for deploying already existing technological advances for the building of new economic calculation mechanisms. Particularly it reflects on the merit of artificial intelligence and automation technologies that direct information gathering, value calculation, and signal generation in the financial system. In demonstrating the planning potential of these, the paper traces the ideological,

economic, and political repercussions of such applications. Methodologically, given the interconnectivity, indeterminacy, and undecidability of the political situation that surrounds any economic mechanism, the dynamic, continuous, and situational nature of such a forecast oriented mechanism is foregrounded.

— James Roberts

### **THE INHERENT TENSIONS OF DEMOCRATIC ECONOMIC PLANNING**

When we try to think about a post-capitalist society, the question of the functioning of the economic system inevitably rises. In the second half of the 20th century a variety of authors tried to develop visions of what could be an allocation organisation that would supersede USSR-style centralized top-down economic planning and the so-called free market existing in western countries. This paper will first briefly present three models that integrated elements of democracy into economic planning: Cornelius Castoriadis' autonomy project, Murray Bookchin's libertarian municipalism and Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel's participatory economics.

After this brief review, the paper will present two unresolved tensions that are inherent to the idea of democratic economic planning. The first one is about the status of needs, compensation and work in such system. The second tension revolves around money, prices and allocation of resources.

As we will see, the models presented do point

to very interesting openings about these questions, but they do not offer satisfying or complete answers to these important issues. In fact, they bring us to a stage of economic thinking where the notion of market and planning fade away to give place to a renewed vision of democracy and economic organization.

— Simon Tremblay-Pepin

### **MONEY AND PLANNING**

The last decade saw a cycle of struggle – ‘the Arab Spring’, ‘the movement of squares’, ‘Occupy’ – in which a distancing from the institutions and apparatuses of governments was accompanied by precursory experimentations with decentralisation and internationalism. On the other side of this coin, the last decade has seen the development of so-called ‘cryptocurrencies’, themselves based on a certain decentralisation and internationalism, but in this case in the form of money. Indeed, cryptocurrencies in their current form function mainly as vehicles for financial speculation, payment, and the accumulation of wealth, but despite their function the problems encountered in their development, both technical and political, provide useful insights insofar as a decentralised, international economy of planning and working in common is our horizon. Here, insofar as the technical and political configuration of such an economy is concerned, it is necessary to address the relationships between labour, consumption, and planning, relationships currently mediated by money. In doing so, what is revealed is a

need to revisit the question of transition, but on an international scale.

— Jonathan King

### **LOGISTICS, INSURRECTION, PLANNING**

Logistics marks not just the heightened influence and profitability of the distributive sectors of economic activity but a broader political and economic logic that seeks to subject work and life to the principles of seamless circulation. Against this totalising tendency, there always remains the threat of friction, contingencies and disruption. This paper will discuss three key sites of planning in the territory of logistics. First, how the contemporary economy is already planned logistically through the technological and managerial innovations adopted following the so-called ‘logistics revolution’. Second, I will account for the potential for projects of planned insurrection and counter-logistics in constructing political and economic futures beyond exploitative supply chains. Logistical planning demonstrates the inherent structural vulnerabilities in capital’s contemporary accumulation. Understanding logistics therefore contributes to a project of mapping infrastructure and chokepoints as part of a planned insurrection beyond symbolic moments of temporary disruption. However, insurrection is irrelevant in the absence of any thought for what follows. Third, I will address the consequences of logistical insurrection in terms of the need for new forms of planning and distribution in the immediate and long term. The paper will finally consider the possibility of repurposing the tools and technologies of logistics for an economy

guided by a radically different plan.

— Nathalie Jaques

### **PLANNING FROM BELOW: BUILDING COMMUNAL POWER IN VENEZUELA**

What does popular planning look like in practice? While we have few examples, we also tend to overlook radical experiments unfolding right under our collective noses. Since 2006, thousands of poor Venezuelans have been building participatory, grassroots self-government on the local level, and since 2010 have consolidated a network of communes to manage local production directly and democratically. This experiment remains tense and contradictory however, an uphill battle against capitalism and even the state itself, but one that arguably offers the only possible escape from the economic and political crisis currently racking Venezuela.

— George Ciccariello-Maher

### **TINO RANGATIRATANGA AGAINST CAPITALISM**

This paper will take a snapshot of the struggle for Tino Rangatiratanga here in Aotearoa in the context of the Pacific. It will draw on experiences of building solidarity with different Indigenous Peoples struggles and explore what that means for those organising against capitalism.

— Teanau Tuiono

### **TE TIRITI, INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

As an experienced indigenous activist for environmental and social justice issues,



Marama will discuss the struggle to uphold tino rangatiratanga and Māori environmental leadership, the importance of solidarity with indigenous peoples around the world and the role of Te Tiriti in environmental politics.

— Marama Davidson

### **PLANNING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO CHEAP LUXURY PUBLIC HOUSING**

There is perhaps no more obvious need for robust economic planning in Aotearoa/New Zealand than in the housing sector. The internal dynamics of the market, held in place by capitalist government policy, have produced a social crisis characterised by poverty, homelessness, ill health and death. Against growing evidence to the contrary, prevailing capitalist ideology maintains that an increase in supply and a decrease in demand will solve this crisis in favour of those currently struggling to access healthy, secure and affordable housing. However in practice, market based approaches continue to fail to deliver quality housing for people living on low incomes. It is clear that the answers to the housing crisis lie outside of the market. Those unafraid to face the truth of this situation can boldly propose to begin the relatively straightforward but political challenging task of decommodifying land and housing. What is called for is nothing less than completely eliminating the market price of land from the housing equation, while prioritising people and the environment in urban and rural planning. It is time to get serious about advancing arguments for a mass build of

universally accessible public/state housing with maintenance rents, and centering community led housing developments learning from the established tradition of Māori papakainga.

— Shane Malva

### **PRAXIS AND PROGRAMME - PLANNING FOR A PLANNED ECONOMY**

Organise Aotearoa is a newly-formed, broad-based grouping organising against capitalism and its symptoms in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and attempting to popularise a vision of how Aotearoa could be organised differently. As well as mobilising activists around specific campaigns, we've been focusing on developing a programme that situates our society in terms of a historical process of capitalism and colonisation, lays out the possibilities for an economy and a society not based on those systems, and proposes a strategy to bring us there. In order not to separate praxis from programme, we've been using the writing of this document as an opportunity to work with other groups in order to build unity around a strong analysis positing the necessity of, among other things, a planned economy. Here, we are interested in talking through this process, sharing some of our preliminary conclusions on what a democratically planned economy might look like in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and discussing how we can work to make it a reality.

— Organise Aotearoa