

The injustice of ideological power: a Lacanian interrogation with a dash of Foucault of its implications for planning in a neoliberal world

Michael Gunder

m.gunder@auckland.ac.nz

Since the 1970s, critical planning theory, in its various liberal, Marxian, post-structural and related persuasions, has extensively explored the concepts of power and ideology, and particularly, how both have been deployed in the manifestation of social and spatial injustice. Yet, the concept of ideology and how it acts as a mechanism of power to structure social relations has often been often discounted in much of this more recent critical literature (Gunder 2015a). This includes that predicated on Foucault's very insightful conceptualisations of power and discourse, for he 'admonishe[d] us to move on from a concept of ideology, or hegemony, as it still maintains the concept of sovereignty' (Gunder 2010: 304). Foucault's conceptualisations of the nature of power in regard to governmentality, normalisation and inter-subjective relationships continues to provide important insights for understanding contemporary planning contexts; yet, these are often contexts driven by a 'hegemonic discourse' of a neo-liberal ideological vision of self-reliant society predicated by 'self-managing and enterprising individuals' (Davoudi and Madanipour 2013: 557). Indeed, this paper contends that we continue to reside in a globalised society largely predicated and shaped by sovereign transcendent ideas of a world of progressive entrepreneurial betterment. This is a world still largely produced and structured by ideology.

Accordingly, in contrast to Foucault's admonishment, this paper posits a return to ideological critique. However, this is a return that specifically engages with Foucault's conceptualisation of power, but one that also draws on a Lacanian understanding of subject formation and desire to provide causal explanation as to how Foucaultian normalisation and related processes continue in their disciplinary

deployments to help shape the contemporary 'independent' neo-liberal subject. The paper does so to facilitate Foucault's (1994: 133) call for 'a new politics of truth' that detaches 'the power of truth from the forms of hegemony' – 'social, economic, and cultural' – 'from in which it operates at the current time'. Moreover, this is a new politics of truth predicated on an understanding of the contemporary subject, who is situated in a globalised society of commanded enjoyment, where in theory, 'nearly everything is possible due to technology' and the role of the market in constituting consumptively driven gratification in all facets of life (Gunder and Hillier 2009: 108).

In particular, the paper will apply Lacan's (2006: 690) fundamental speculative question of subjective desire to the Other: "*Chè vuoi*", "what do you want", so as to explore how the subject internalises the Other's discourses of normalisation to shape their societal identifications and resultant agency as a subject conforming to what they think the collective Other desires of them. The paper will investigate this subjection of identification for planners and their performative agency (after Butler 1997, 2010), derived from the subject's recognition, and also misrecognition, of the norms of ideological conformity.

Further, this paper contends and will demonstrate that the hegemonic power of ideological conformity, especially its role in constituting the norms and 'common sense of the day' (after Gramsci 1971), continues to often constitute pernicious injustice for the majority of a polity's subjects. Under the dominance of neoliberal ideology, this is an injustice that obscures the majority's actual interests, redirects their agency in the interests of a hegemonic minority, and alienates them 'from the achievement of their own desires' (Gunder 2015b: 14). This specifically includes the agency of planners and the resultant built environment that planning facilitates for the 'planned' in its policy formulation for the provision of an ideologically defined desirous future (Gunder 2010, 2014).

After the introduction, the paper will contextualise how hegemonic ideology functions from a Lacanian perspective through discourse, desire and fantasy drawing on Žižek's (1989: 125) crucial insight that ideological critique requires 'two complementary procedures'. The first procedure is not dissimilar to Foucault's discourse analysis, in that it is an analysis of an ideological discourse so as to

deconstruct its symptomatic intents and spontaneous meanings. The second procedure, sits considerably at odds to Foucault's position, as it is concerned with how this ideological intent grips the subject at both the conscious and unconscious level, through mechanisms of desire and enjoyment, which generally are embedded in the promise of fantasies yet to be fulfilled. In doing so, as well as drawing on Lacanian scholars, this section will also draw on the work of Butler (1997), Vighi and Felder (2007) and Springer (2012), so as to compare and contrast this Lacanian ideological perspective with that of Foucault's more purely discourse focussed analysis.

The subsequent section will then engage with Lacan's (2006: 690) question of '*Chè vuoi*', prior to exploring what this implies for the materialisation of the agency of the normalised subject. The section will also demonstrate how this understanding enhances and builds on the understandings put forth by Foucault on power. The penultimate section will then draw on exemplars of planning practice in New Zealand to illustrate these mechanisms at work and so foster further discussion, drawing on the methodology deployed in a prior study conducted by this author to illustrate aspects of Foucaultian governmentality in New Zealand planning practice (Gunder and Mouat 2002).

The paper aspires to demonstrate how power acts through ideology and the discourses and fantasies that ideology propagates, to shape both the planner and those that are planned. While doing so this text will explore the central role of desire in subjection and its subordination, prior to speculating in its conclusion, in contrast to Foucault's avowed avoidance of prescriptive action (Smart 1986: 166), if there is an alternative path for agency outside of reinforcing neoliberal planning practice to that of Žižek's radical revolutionary act (Stavrakakis 2011: 310)? That is, are there viable means, short of profound radicalism, to liberate planning from its fundamental alignment with the invisible hand of the neoliberal market and transcend planning's ideological driven projection of today's hegemonic aspirations and desires, with its resultant injustices, into the future materialisation of the built environment?

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