

Editor's Note

When the editorial board of the BPJ met in late 2009 to decide on a theme for this volume, we took two issues as starting points. First, while the current economic crisis (entering its third year at our meeting time) had been conceived in the ether of the financial sector, its on-the-ground manifestations – from the foreclosed neighborhoods in the American inner cities and remote suburbs to the unfinished skyscrapers in Dubai – were, in fact, ultimately urban in nature. Second, we grappled with the question of what to make of the apocalyptic discourses of “crisis” ubiquitous in media, academic circles and, to be fair, even our own conversations. In other words, we decided that we did not want to publish an issue of the BPJ iterating that the crisis has arrived, is here to stay, or is on its way out; instead, our focus and main concern for this issue is exploring what this crisis, or more specifically, what all the “discourses” of crises for planning, whether as practice or as academic discipline, mean for cities and for city dwellers around the globe.

The editorial board for this issue is comprised of a wide range of Berkeley's graduate students from different disciplines interested in the urban - architecture, geography and of course, planning; the final product therefore reflects our diverse interests and preoccupations, from planning theory to regional economic development, and from transportation to environmental planning. Influenced by post-modern/post-positivist planning notions, this volume avoids speaking of one single “crisis,” and, at points, even questions the very idea of crisis. As such, our main objective is not for us to make a pronouncement of the final word on the matter. Instead, we invited colleagues and the general BPJ public to engage in a debate, share, and contrast points of view, and ultimately left for the reader to decide what to make of this apparent mess.

The reader of this volume will find that we have included pieces that present diverse and often opposing arguments, and this is no coincidence: As it often happens (here we include a twist on the cliché of the old saying), “someone's crisis is another's opportunity.” There is, however, an underlying tone uniting all pieces included here that invites the reader to question the doomsday discourses that tell us that we have reached the end of the line for city (if not all human) life; it warns us that financial disasters (as much as any other disasters) are regrettable, not only because of their devastating power, but because they enable subsequent destructive measures in the name of a crisis, an emergency, a recovery, or a new opportunity. Oftentimes these actions are implemented without giving planners, much less citizens, the opportunity to ponder their long-term consequences.

This volume begins with a piece from fellow Berkeley student Josh Pollack on the crisis discourse found in the water management in California. In "California Water and the Rhetoric of Crisis," Pollack discusses the highly politicized recent debates concerning how to deal with water allocation in the California Central Valley as he makes evident that the discourse of "crisis" usually takes precedence over the creation and implementation of a long-term, sustainable plan for managing water in the region. Pollack's piece shows the complex relationships between politics, ecological sustainability, and economics that are usually obscured under rhetorical use of the term "crisis."

Following this pertinent essay, Erick Guerra and Stephen M. Wheeler present diverging opinions on how planners have approached the issue of climate change. In "Too Much Riding on Climate Change?" Guerra frames climate change as a "wicked problem," following the logic of Rittel and Weber's classic piece, for which there are not always clear-cut solutions, as he criticizes the strategies that transportation planners have used to manage climate change as a concrete problem that can be solved by reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, he warns of the unintended consequences of taking such drastic actions. In contrast, Stephen M. Wheeler's "A New Conception of Planning in the Era of Climate Change" asserts that global warming is a discrete problem for which a variety of solutions exist, but that are never put into practice, because planners show an unwillingness to override complex and politicized decision-making processes.

In "Crossing to the Other Shore: Navigating the Troubled Waters of Cultural Loss and Eco-Crisis in Late-Socialist China," Zhou Lei investigates the rhetorical use of "crisis" as a technology of governance in contemporary China. Zhou Lei analyzes how discourses of the environmental collapse of Kunming Lake are constantly appropriated by the local government according to specific political and economic needs of the time. This paper presents the perspective of a Chinese author writing from China, and reflects the BPJ's interest in starting conversations with and among young scholars located outside the "Global North."

In the following piece Brian Davis and Peter Sigrist propose an alternative planning model for dealing with contemporary design challenges. "Open Source Practice," the authors argue, is a design and planning model that uses Internet technologies to facilitate political mobilization, design collaboration and funding. Davis and Sigrist borrow the concept "open source" from the information technologies world, but their proposed model clearly has the intention of creating more inclusive, bottom-up collaboration between developers, planners, and citizens. While the authors point out the challenges to a truly inclusive execution of this model, they conclude that this kind of innovation can provide planners

with the necessary adaptiveness required for dealing with today's sustainability problems.

In the essay titled "Shrinking Cities in a Time of Crisis," Yvonne Audirac, Sylvie Fol, and Cristina Martinez-Fernandez situate the issue of "the shrinking city" within the current economic context. Their piece problematizes the notion of urban shrinkage as they point out that this is something that is not new, definitive, nor necessarily a sign of social and economic decline; moreover the authors point out that urban shrinkage across the globe should be analyzed as part of larger processes of social and economic restructuring at the regional and global level. Their piece also serves as an introduction to four articles, discussed below, that were written by their colleagues at the Shrinking Cities International Research Network (SCiRN), formed at Berkeley's Institute of Urban and Regional Development (IURD) in 2004.

The first two cases, presented by our colleagues Betka Zakirova and Daniel Florintin focus on what is perhaps the most iconic contemporary example of urban shrinkage: the post-unification Berlin-Brandenburg region. In "Shrinkage at the Urban Fringe: Crisis or Opportunity?," Zakirova argues that the current depopulation of certain areas of the Berlin-Brandenburg region in fact constitutes the current stage of an oscillating pattern of population gain and loss that the Berlin region has experienced for several generations. Furthermore, Zakirova proposes that more knowledge about how these cycles take place in the suburbs and an approach to urban development that considers these fluctuations as natural is necessary to create sustainable urbanism in the long term. Presenting a different perspective on the same region and problem, Florentine's "The 'Perforated City': Leipzig's Model of Urban Shrinkage Management" illustrates how a local government geographically close to Berlin, but drastically distant in terms of fiscal capacity, deals with immediate problems resulting from a regional process of economic restructuring. The author's research, which includes interviews with local government officials and planners, provides firsthand insight into how planners deal with shrinkage.

In "The Effects of Globalization in the First Suburbs of Paris," by Marie-Fleur Albecker, Paris is presented as a post-modern metropolis experiencing processes of decentralization, suburbanization, deindustrialization, real estate speculation, and an architecture of spectacle that has come to characterize global cities throughout the world. As the author illustrates, Paris, rather than shrinking, is becoming a polycentric region with diverse poles of economic activity that (re)arrange population. The final article from our section on shrinking cities is from Sophie Buhnik and is titled "From *Shrinking Cities* to *Toshi no Shukushō*: Identifying Patterns of Urban Shrinkage in the Osaka Metropolitan Area." This article undertakes an

extensive review of demographic data for the Osaka region over the last decades, analyzing several urban policies and developing a complex picture of Japan as a country going through waves of deindustrialization, recurrent socioeconomic crises, and demographic transitions. In this paper, Buhnik emphasizes the importance of identifying the elements of urban shrinkage that are specific to a region and country while comparing these to similar processes taking place across the globe.

As part of the BPJ's interest in approaching urban issues from a variety of angles, this volume includes myriad short essays coming from both students and well known scholars that present timely and provocative reflections on the crisis. From Peter Marcuse's essay on the limits of planning in dealing with this crisis to William Riggs' smart analysis of how bad planning has affected his hometown – included in our Urban Fringe section – we have captured differing opinions about how crisis and planning may be connected. We hope that the reader of this volume –whether a practitioner, scholar, or student of the urban – finds in this wide range of perspectives an alternative to dogmatic positions for dealing with the complex and multi-layered problems embedded in “the discourses of crisis.” These exercises in critical thinking about the urban constitute the sort of intellectual project that the BPJ seeks to undertake for the benefit of its readers and contributors.

Oscar Sosa, Editor