

INTRODUCTION

City Planning may be a minor league profession, but if it has major league expectations, that's because it's been carrying the ball for a major league idea--the idea of planning. Planning is a major human practice, on the par with science or art, indispensable and ever expanding in modern society. Public sector planners in the U.S. are still slow to recognize this and ambivalent about planning's role and value. Serving in a society that has made a fetish of the old myth of laissez-faire, it is not surprising that, paraphrasing Wilbur,¹

We milk the cow of planning, and as we do,

We whisper in her ear, "You are no good."

Even in private corporations planning plays a more central role than in the public sector. Indeed, a corporation without planning is a contradiction in terms. Planning is even beginning to take hold, with a vengeance, of personal life--witness the \$150 leather-bound "Personal Planners" that promise to guide the busy professional through his or her day without a glitch.

But despite our ambivalent allegiance, city and regional planning has done a creditable job carrying the ball for the idea of planning. Over the past 30 years, no other professional or academic field has shown as great and consistent a concern for the nature of planning, its justification, its institutions, its process or methodology, its relation to science, its role in history, and its assumptions. This concern has made Theory of Planning courses--however divergent in content--standard offerings in city planning school curricula. Even a cursory review of city planning's professional journals testifies to this concern.

This idea of planning, as a broad process linking values, knowledge and action, has enabled us as a profession to maintain our claim to comprehensiveness, and to extend our concerns beyond physical issues to social, political, environmental, and economic ones. Of course, allegiance to this idea of planning has made us open to attacks such as Wildavsky's "If Planning Is Everything, Then Maybe It's Nothing." But what's so wrong with a practice that could claim with Terence, "Nothing human is alien to me"? Surely, our society is in great need of such a perspective.

The diversity of issues examined in the articles in this double-issue of the Journal is testimony to the carrying power of the idea of planning: Weaver and Cunningham's article addresses the lack of cultural-historical sensitivity in social impact assessment studies, especially when the proposed developments concern native communities, and they present a theoretical scheme for incorporating such factors. Molina points out the problems with an industrial development program in Mexican border towns which has failed to take into account potential social impacts. Coyula traces the post-revolutionary history of urban planning in Havana.

Fields shows the historical interrelationship between economic and housing policies in Cuba. Dunlap presents a vignette of self-help urban renovation in Havana. Barton traces the history of the neighborhood movement in San Francisco. Patton and Ross discuss the issue of comparable worth, and show how a municipality, (they use Richmond, California as a hypothetical case) can take leadership in extending this policy to the private sector. Violich reflects on the factors and processes that could increase the urban planner's or designer's identity with a place, using Berkeley as his case study. Chew examines Michael Graves' Portland Building from the perspective of public life. Harrington reviews the arguments for and against divestment in South Africa as it relates to the University of California's position on the issue, and makes a strong case for divestment. Ellis reviews Christine Boyer's *Dreaming the Rational City* and reflects on the value of historical interpretations of the city planning profession in the United States.

The concerns addressed in this issue swing in scale from the international, and national, to the local community; from the individual project scale to national policy; from an examination of physical features of a building, to investment options and responsibilities of a public corporation. The connecting link between these articles, regardless of the scale or area of expertise, is the perspective of planning. The planning perspective is called for in problem situations, or, more generally, in situations calling for public decisions. It can be identified as a way of making decisions or addressing problems that is long-range, comprehensive, consequential (that is, that pays attention to potential consequences of action), reasonable, explicitly normative, and socially responsible.

This perspective is reflected in the overall themes that weave the diverse articles--the identification of factors that should enter into public decisions, the clarification and evaluation of social goals, the devising and evaluation of institutional means for incorporating important issues, factors, interests, and evaluative processes in public deliberation, and the assessment of planned intervention. Thus, the planning perspective informs a reasoning process, the planning process.

Much literature and controversy in planning theory concerns the nature of this process. My own belief is that the idea of planning is our name for the old concept of practical reason, as contrasted with pure reason (e.g., science, mathematics). As in practical reason, the cognitive product of planning is a recommendation, "In this situation, after assessing facts and opportunities, and considering the potential consequences of the alternatives, we or you should do such and such." Such statements, John Dewey held, are practical judgments, with distinctive features.² Coincidentally, Dewey developed a theory of truth that almost everybody misunderstood. The misunderstanding stemmed from the fact that in Dewey's theory, practical judgments (recommendations) and not

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factual judgments (descriptive propositions) had epistemological priority. In Dewey's theory, knowledge and truth accrued first to plans that had borne fruit, and only derivatively to descriptive and other kinds of judgment. This is not the place to argue the pros and cons of Dewey's theory. I bring it up to show that at least one philosophical tradition has developed a theory of knowledge where practical reason, planning, is first and foremost. Pragmatism would make the idea of planning as major league as you can get, which, I think, is right.

Hilda Blanco, Editor

NOTES

- ¹ Richard Wilbur's couplet, which depicts the idealist position in his poem, "Epistemology" (1950) reads:
We milk the cow of the world, and as we do,
We whisper in her ear, "You are not true."

See *The Poems of Richard Wilbur*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963.

- ² See John Dewey's "The Logic of Judgments of Practise," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 12, Nos. 19 and 20 (1915); also see his *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), enlarged 1947, reprinted 1957 by Beacon Press, p. 155 ff.; see H. S. Thayer's *Meaning and Action*, N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1968, pp. 192-99, for a good discussion of Dewey's theory of truth.