

Editors' Note

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In the inaugural introduction of the *Berkeley Planning Journal* in 1984, Hilda Blanco wrote that one of the defining characteristics of the Berkeley planning program was a “social conscience, expressed in its early rejection of the planning profession as merely technical expertise, its critical attitude towards established institutions, and its strong advocacy for social justice.” This understanding of planning’s position at the intersection of the technical and the social raises questions about the relationship between planning academia and “the public.”

We are thus pleased to introduce this 40th Anniversary special issue of the Berkeley Planning Journal on the theme of publics/counterpublics. Our special issue title echoes Michael Warner’s 2002 *Publics and Counterpublics*, marking our shared commitments: to those publics that define themselves against the dominant ones or resist categorization; to a sensitivity to spatial and temporal context; to the importance of shifting between empirics and interpretation on multiple scales. Different types of publics arise in different cultures, yet, Warner argues, it is impossible to imagine contemporary society without the notion of a public. As Moten and Harney (2013) claim, despite the often perverse incentives and imperial histories of academia, certain crevices of today’s US university can provide refuge for streams of critical thought that cannot survive elsewhere.

The editorial team initially conceived of this topic in the midst of the Fall 2022 United Auto Workers strike, a struggle for better wages and working conditions that dislodged our conceptions of the “public,” both discursive and actual. The state’s shrinking commitment to funding undergraduate teaching while increasing its share of in-state undergraduate students raised the question of what makes the University of California public. There proliferated multiple spheres with different relationships to officialdom and to faculty for student-workers to discuss and express demands, enriching the ferment of the labor movement on campus. This highlighted the multiple publics to which we belong and speak, as students, as workers, as instructors, as writers, as speakers, as residents. If we agree that the promise of the university, like the promise of the city, is the democratic encounter of different ways of thinking and ways of living, how should we study it?

The four peer-reviewed articles in this volume of the BPJ address the question of publics and counterpublics across a range of approaches and contexts. First, Darien Alexander Williams’s article “Planning from the Black Counterpublic” illuminates the

history of the Boston Black United Front, an umbrella organization-cum-counterpublic institution that was active in numerous liberatory struggles from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. Jessica Bonner and Manish Chalana's "Resistance through Existence: the persistence of queer non-male spaces in Seattle" examines the placemaking strategies that queer women and non-binary people deploy to create spaces of safety and belonging within a heteronormative urban context. "From Public Housing to Public Choice: Jane Jacobs, Friedrich Hayek, and the Antinomies of Urban Liberalism" by Jonathan Marty investigates the enduring affinities of Jane Jacobs's 1961 classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* with the individualism of the Austrian school through the liberalization of US federal housing policy. Finally, in her article "Deconstructing the Density Discourse: Exploring the Densification, Construction, and Land-Use Triplex in Pakistan," Noor Mazhar analyzes the material and discursive disjunctures of urban densification as a policy objective in Lahore.

In addition to these fine contributions on publics and counterpublics, we were excited to solicit some intriguing Berkeley Planning Journal alumni contributions in honor of our 40th anniversary. In "What's a PhD for?" former editor Raphaël Fischler offers personal reflections on what a doctoral planning education has meant for him and what it should mean for the field. Inaugural editor Hilda Blanco offers paths forward for the city and regional planning discipline to confront climate change in her article, "Climate Change Challenges to City and Regional Planning." Our roundtable, "Publics and Planning Academia: Translation, Interpretation, Resonance," features stimulating discussion from Fernando Burga, Ricardo Cardoso, Jia-Ching Chen, Paavo Monkkonen, and Hayden Shelby on finding and forging one's publics as a planning academic across disciplinary, theoretical, linguistic, and cultural contexts.

We call for more attention in planning scholarship to the problems of publics and counterpublics at the level of the university, the city, and the globe. Though this theme emerged from the strike of Fall 2022, the following Fall saw another kind of disjuncture on campus and around the world following the attacks of October 7 and the Israeli military's subsequent destruction of Gaza, internationally condemned as genocidal. Though incommensurable with the scale of displacement, violence, and death in the Levant, rising anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on campus have threatened to fracture the public sphere of US universities, with especially magnified chilling effects on protestors and academics supporting Palestinian liberation. The events of this past year bring into harsh light the purpose of academia as not only a site of knowledge production but also one frontier in the struggle for justice.

Who may speak, to whom, and on whose behalf: these have always been critical questions for planning. We argue that the lenses of publics and counterpublics contribute to a stronger research agenda on these core questions. If we are committed to not always categorizing, commodifying, flattening, normalizing the politics of (Black/queer/liberatory) counterpublics, can planners imagine themselves doing less? In other words, to what extent can planners cede authority without fundamentally exacerbating

the erosion of the public sphere? If planning scholars fundamentally study the way in which words make worlds, who now speaks new worlds into being?

References

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