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Introduction

by Peter Hall, Jonathan Mason, Larissa Muller, Michael O'Dell, and Michael Reilly

In this edition of the Berkeley Planning Journal we explore the renewed interest in regions and regional planning. Many writers have commented on, and attempted to theorize, the surprising re-emphasis of the regional within an increasingly global world. It might be convenient to write this off as an assertion of defiant localism in the face of powerful multinational corporations and remote international treaties and organizations. However, for planners concerned about the growth and development of places and people, globalization presents a serious challenge to develop a coherent action agenda at the regional scale. Yet, if the challenge is great, it is not clear that the analytical paradigms and the policy tools of the academy and the profession are adequate.

The 1999 Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning conference in Chicago provided one example of regional planning's renewed prominence. For the first time specifically regional planning sessions were held, and regional planning will form a separate track at future meetings. Panelists discussing the future of regional planning on the last day of the conference noted the strengths of the regional tradition in the academy--rigor, critical analysis, a mix of methods, the crossing of urban and rural boundaries, and attention to the intersection of global and local forces. However, this critical interstice is an uncomfortable place; regional planners do not enjoy the administrative certainties and organized client constituencies of other planning sub-fields. As noted by panel chair, Professor Mike Teitz, regional action has never been central to the regional planning tradition, particularly in the United States where the institutions of regional governance are substantially under-developed.

If the regional planning tradition lacks an action framework and a home base from which to pursue its projects, it presents a related, yet distinct set of challenges to the academy. How do we draw an academic boundary around an object of study that itself defies crisp definition, and a content of study that is economics and so much more? The theoretical influences on regional planning today are necessarily diverse. The regional panels attracted a wide diversity of participants, scholars who do not quite feel at home in the economic development, international development, housing and community development and transportation sub-fields of the planning academy. And yet, all of these sub-fields are themselves--and indeed should be--partly regional in their orientation. In an opinion piece in this edition, Stephen Wheeler summarizes his perspective on the breadth of scope that is required both in the content of regional planning, and in the spatial reach of other planning sub-fields.

The contents of this edition reflect the rich possibilities for a style and content of regional planning that extends beyond narrowly economic concerns. In his review of regional planning in Taiwan, Jeffrey Hou weaves together economics, politics, and institutional analysis to highlight the pressure on environmental resources. The paper optimistically suggests that regional development has the potential to encourage endogenous economic growth in the less urbanized regions. However, the failure to recognize regional-level environmental, economic and social

concerns as a result of top-down planning and inter-regional competition may further entrench the disadvantaged regions in pursuing environmentally costly strategies for development. The possibilities and limitations of national policy and legislative action at the regional scale also receives attention in the papers by Hill and Markusen, and Goldman and Deakin.

While Hou's analysis is full of regional actors and agencies, regional organizational territory in the us is more sparsely populated. One of the few arenas for regional planning actions is in the transportation field. Two papers in this year's journal address this issue: Trelstad's case study of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and Goldman and Deakin's overview of the Intermodal Surface Transport Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the new breed of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and regional partnerships it spawned.

Created in 1999, the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) grew out of a public-private process that sought to reform transportation planning in the Atlanta region. Brian Trelstad traces the steps by which a group of businesspeople and civic leaders reformed the planning process in a major American metropolitan region. One conclusion is that precisely because of the absence of strong regional government, the private sector can indeed play a major role in regional planning. And why stop with transportation? Trelstad suggests that the GRTA may become an implementation vehicle for the Georgia Planning Act, a comprehensive but underutilized statewide land use planning statute.

In contrast, the MPOs studied by Todd Goldman and Elizabeth Deakin display more of the caution normally associated with single-purpose regional agencies. They present the findings drawn from their interviews in two dozen large metropolitan regions to review the experience to date with partnerships under ISTEA. In general, MPO activities have been limited to partnerships entailing low levels of interaction. Successes in lower-level partnerships can open doors for higher levels of partnership, but by no means assure it. Deakin and Goldman conclude by arguing that research on the social learning aspects of partnership development could provide insights into the evolution of regional institutions as well- as useful models for progressive practice.

Learning at the regional scale also emerges as an important factor when Catherine Hill and Anne Markusen ask *Do Regions Matter?* Their paper takes on the extremely complex task of relating regional outcomes to differences in regional capabilities, coalitions and histories. The paper employs a novel approach-pooling across a set of in-depth case studies by the authors and other scholars-to understand the impact of military spending cuts and facilities closure in defense dependent regions in the US and Europe. The paper identifies some of the factors contributing to successful conversion and presents recommendations to strengthen national and regional level planning approaches for structural adjustment more generally.

Sishir Chang's provocative paper on vernacular architecture in Singapore can be regarded as a case study of a successful regional housing policy. So successful is this housing policy, he argues, that modernist high rise housing and new towns have become the new architectural vernacular. Although the city-state of Singapore is a special kind of region in which the functional and administrative systems substantially coincide, the paper raises some interesting questions about the possibilities for 'muscular regionalism'.

The final section of this issue is devoted to the review of several recent books addressing some of the wide-ranging concerns of regional planning. Writers such as Manuel Castells and Saskia Sassen have been at the forefront of understanding the impact of global processes on cities. Jess Wendover reviews Sassen's essay collection, *Globalization and its Discontents*, while Pitch Pongsawat places Borja and Castells' practice-oriented *Local and Global* within the context of Castells' prolific writings on advanced capitalism.

If regional planning draws on a strong and critical intellectual tradition, regional planners have not done well at using these insights in their weak and fragmented administrative context. However, the weakening of the nation-state, privatization, and processes of decentralization have renewed interest in the possibilities for regional governance. Jan Whittington reviews Karen Christensen's *Cities and Complexity: Making Intergovernmental Decisions*, and finds interesting possibilities for regional planning in this tight public administration analysis. John Thomas reviews David Rusk's most recent contribution to our understanding of the linkages between government institutions and the shape of urban development, *Inside Game / Outside Game*.

Although the field of regional planning has been dominated by social scientists, environmental planners are increasingly looking to the regional scale as a locus of analysis and action. Lisel Blash reviews Tim Duane's *Shaping the Sierra: Nature, Culture and Conflict in the Changing West*. Duane's bio-region is shaped through the intersection of natural, social, economic and political processes. In Robert Cervero's *The Transit Metropolis: A Global Inquiry*, Stephen Wheeler finds some of the elements of a strategy for a more compact form of urban development.

The review section ends with a tribute to the proud city and regional planning tradition at Berkeley. Matt Adams comes away from Sir Peter Hall's monumental urban history, *Cities in Civilization*, appropriately satisfied that we have not yet found a complete understanding of what makes cities boom and decline. In the final review, Professor Mel Webber shares his thoughtful and personal comments on Peter Oberlander and Eva Newbrun's book, *Houser: The Life and Work of Catherine Bauer*.

The life and work of these scholars reflect what is so exciting and what is so challenging about regional planning. The key policy issues of the day--economic development, environmental sustainability, transportation, housing, and more--all have regional, as well as local and global, dimensions. And the region itself, as the locus of crucial social, economic, institutional processes, is a site for progressive public policy and planning. Through this edition of the Berkeley Planning Journal we hope to have made a contribution to the search for such a progressive regional planning.