Reflections on the *Berkeley Planning Journal*'s Tenth Anniversary: Editors' Introduction to Volume 9

Elizabeth Morris, Rolf Pendall, & Rachel Weinberger

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the *Berkeley Planning Journal*. The end of a decade marks a good time to reflect on its past and future significance for readers, authors, editors, and the field of planning.

The early 1980s were marked by questions about the boundaries, limits, and significance of the field coupled with a search for new paradigms. Founding editor Hilda Blanco, now on the faculty of Hunter College, wrote: "Planning is a major human practice, on the par with science or art, indispensable and ever expanding in modern society." The founding editors wanted to push the field beyond its traditional focus on land use. They envisioned a Berkeley spirit or style of planning that drew from broad intellectual traditions, made a close connection to the social sciences and social research, and had a social conscience, expressed in an early rejection of the planning profession as merely technical expertise, its critical attitude towards established institutions, and its strong advocacy for social justice.

In this vein, the earliest volumes called for greater attention to institutions, the socio-political and political-economic context of planning, and the historical conditions that shape planners' ideas and theories. The earliest members of the editorial collective were also concerned with fostering a sense of community, both in planning theory and among themselves, to put at center stage the personal affiliations that form the backbone of, and a great source of satisfaction behind, any professional and public set of practices. The theme of community and its meaning for planning was expressed also in a piece by Richard Meier, one of this year's authors, on "Community Ecology."

Editors past and present have been repeatedly challenged to find the intellectual relationships among articles concerned with very disparate subject matters, theoretical frameworks, and research methodologies. As Blanco wrote in 1985,

> 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. ... 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, [attentive to consequences], reasonable, explicitly normative, and socially responsible.

Professor Emeritus Peter Hall once remarked that an article submitted to the *Journal* underwent the most critical review of any publication in the field. We take this as the highest of compliments. As editors, we have the responsibility to bring the ideas circulating in the academic planning community at Berkeley to a wider audience. Each article has been groomed by three to five reviewers in close consultation with the authors to bring it into the most pithy and useful form. The ideas and arguments are the contributors', of course, but each year we help new scholars to find that wider audience and to bring interesting new work to you the reader.

A new subscriber to the *Journal* recently asked whether this issue would have a special theme. The answer she received was that, if anything, the *Berkeley Planning Journal* specializes in being eclectic. Eclecticism notwithstanding, we bring discipline to the field through the editorial process; we work closely with the authors and reviewers to bring greater clarity and sharpen the multiple visions within the planning perspective. This forces us to be comprehensive in our outlook, able to work across disparate subjects, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks to bring out the key ideas and important arguments and findings.

As in *Journal*s past, this year's volume reflects both the diversity of our field and the significance of a few important ideas and common units of analysis. Several of the articles insist on the centrality of detailed review of institutional policy and politics. **Brian Muller**'s contribution presents new insights into state and local economic development policy. Assisted by his own experience and lengthy interviews with development officials from state and local government, he paints a picture of the "entrepreneurial state" in Texas that reveals surprising innovation at the local level—quite a different picture than the partisan infighting, big-interest influence, and bureaucratic inexperience that quickly crippled efforts at the state level.

In an extended literature review and essay, **Balaji Parthasarathy** also considers economic development, but from a much larger scale:

the long view of Marxist theories of Third-world development. Parthsarathy's article, like Muller's, reminds us that we need to look to the local level for a complete and subtle view of development. Balaji notes that the now-unfashionable Marxist models are those with universalistic and static views; other models, still Marxist, are also available, linking local (national) conditions to constellations of power and innovation that vary from one place to another. **Rolf Pendall**, like Muller and Parthasarathy, places great emphasis on the significance of local and regional institutions. Pendall's article, on water pollution, asks how and why the San Francisco Bay Area has adopted particular approaches to cleaning up urban runoff—a thorny problem of politics and economics that now constitutes the most significant area for local and regional water-quality regulators.

Two other articles center on questions of trade-offs, values, and accounting. **Kara Kockelman**'s article—a cost-benefit analysis of very high speed rail from Sacramento to San Diego—is both an example of rigorous accounting and a surprisingly optimistic assessment of the potential benefits of such a system. The care taken in this analysis, which extends to both clear economic costs and benefits and less tangible pros and cons, shows convincingly that heavy rail should not be ruled out, despite the disheartening news that AMTRAK will soon discontinue passenger-rail service from the Bay Area to Sacramento. **Richard Meier**'s article takes us in a different direction: toward a more comprehensive definition of sustainability, one that hearkens back to and extends on Meier's article in the *Journal*'s first issue. Although other authors have also pursued this difficult subject, Meier perceptively connects a term that has become muddied with the long human romance with accounting. Only by expanding our definition of accounts, Meier suggests, can we develop a meaningful idea of sustainability that works in both the short and the long term.

We are especially pleased to have sponsored a **roundtable on the "new urbanism"** for inclusion in this year's *Journal*. This physical design movement reflects desires for more human-scaled and sustainable communities. In such places, ideally at least, households of all ages and incomes can find places to live; pedestrians, cars, and transit can co-exist; and environmental protection can be reconciled with our needs for growth and development. The participants in the roundtable—critics and champions; designers, planners, and academics—concluded, and we agree, that the designs can reach their full potential if and only if they become wedded to institutional renewal and reconstruction in both central cities and suburbs.

Finally, editor emeritus **Dave Simpson** offers a lighthearted look at life on the information superhighway. This institution promises to solidify shifts predicted more than 30 years ago, also at Berkeley: the formation of, in Mel Webber's terms, "community without propinquity" (Webber 1963). Ever eager to remain on the cutting edge, the editorial collective will very likely bring the *Berkeley Planning Journal* on-line sometime in 1995.

Does 10 years of publication make the *BPJ* an institution in its own right? On one hand, editorial succession has often uncertain from one year to the next. This year's editors are in the same quandary: despite active support and involvement from many quarters, we send off this volume with no idea who will be editor and business manager for Volume 10. On the other hand, we have a straightforward and accepted system of solicitation and review of articles, as well as a continuing commitment by the editorial collective to review, comment on, and proofread articles. Just as important, the *Journal* has become increasingly self-supporting. We now cover most of the $2,000 printing and mailing costs through subscriptions and individual sales. The College of Environmental Design Alumni office recently made a subscription to the *Journal* part of their alumni benefits package.

Have we succeeded in publishing a set of articles that are both disciplined and comprehensive? That do justice to our field and the importance of the issues our authors address? We believe so. We hope you will find this year's work timely, informative, thoughtful, and interesting, comprehensive in outlook, disciplined in approach. That has been the *Journal*'s mission since its founding: to forge the intellectual community of Berkeley faculty, students, alumni, and visiting researchers, and to foster its unique spirit of inquiry. With your support, the *Journal* will continue into its next decade.

Reference

Webber, Melvin M. 1963. "Order in diversity: community without propinquity," in Lowdon Wingo, ed., *Cities in Space: The Future Use of Urban Land*, 25-54. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.