

Do you have something to say about the future of planning practice? What are the major problems facing the field? What initiatives are needed to recognize change and develop capacity? What are the prospects for the future? How should education and research respond?

Several scholars and practitioners were invited to briefly address these questions and some of the issues they raise. They represent a range of individuals with diverse perspectives on the future of planning practice and implications for research and education. They were willing to write under time constraints, but surely there are others who will want to respond, share ideas, and submit perspectives of their own.

These contributors present strong positions and return to first questions about planning practice. Peter Marcuse decries the retreat of some planners from progressive ideals to instrumental or technocratic practice, from long range planning to short range expediency, from the broader public to narrow private interests, and from ordinary citizens to established powerholders. But he finds other planners who seek better cities, improved quality of life, participatory democracy, and social justice ends. He urges educators to recall earlier ideals: "The vision of a brighter future is what has attracted people to planning since the beginning of the profession, and it has been what it has made the profession worth practicing. It is particularly in times such as this that vision must be courageously pursued, not feebly abandoned."

Paul Davidoff and Lisa Boyd challenge educators to expand planning curricula to emphasize peace, justice, race, class, and other unresolved issues. How can schools prepare students for work as planners of peace, disarmament, and avoidance of holocaust? How can curricula address fairness, equity, and distribution of wealth in relation to education, housing, and health? Davidoff and Boyd advocate educational change to help solve problems, give curricula new relevance, and attract and excite students.

Jacqueline Leavitt argues that closing the gender gap can help make planning more relevant to the larger society. Demographic, employment, income, and other factors are affecting urban areas and causing problems for women. Women are increasingly likely to concentrate in central cities, rely on mass transit, live in public housing, and receive federal assistance of some types. They are experiencing problems of access to education, work, transportation, security, day care and other services. Leavitt believes that planning educators are in a position to analyze what women do, how they organize themselves, and assess the consequences of change. She traces the roots of planning education to a time when physical planning was central, but concludes that new initiatives are needed to broaden the field to incorporate issues related to women.

John Forester examines contemporary changes in planning from design to applied social science. While many planners concerned themselves with social issues, urban problems, policy analysis, and large-scale planning models, design practice declined in importance. But Forester expects future planners to return to design and reintegrate physical and environmental practice. He also expects that this return may challenge the market orientation and economic dominance of the past, and provide new opportunities to learn from those whose thinking and lessons have been deemphasized for years: "The renewed attention to design practices in planning will provide an occasion of immense professional and intellectual opportunity. May we make the best of it."

Allan Jacobs disagrees with those who would take planning too far afield. He believes that there is nothing new about planners operating in a political-organizational arena, but he warns against introducing new political, organizing, or other practice skill courses directly into the curricula rather than incorporating them in established courses emphasizing traditional strengths. He believes that city planning has been most effective when it has concerned itself with professional work, clean proposals, advocacy of viewpoints, and specific plans and programs responding to popularly held values. He urges planners not to go astray, but rather to learn lessons from arenas where city planners produce results, including physical and environmental planning and design, studies of impacts of traffic on neighborhoods, and making streets more liveable. He concludes that these are areas "where urban planners make headway, are supported and in demand . . . That's where the payoffs will be for city planners. Planners per se? They could be involved in anything, and nothing."