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Modern Progressives: A Future for Planning?

by Pierre Clavel

American city planning got its start with the progressive movement in urban politics in the first decade of this century. In the hands of such reformers as Tom Johnson, Seth Low, and Charles Beard, progressive politics meant a move toward functional administration and the recovery of home rule and representative government. Reformers saw city planning as an instrument toward these ends. Planning was to be more than a beautification program; it was to be a buttress to the new corps of urban administrators and politicians and a means of democratic participation. Planners, slow to fill this role, did not establish their own progressive tradition until the 1920s with the work of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, and later in New Deal programs and in Puerto Rico.

A development parallel to this earlier movement began in local politics in the 1970s. Experience in Berkeley, Cleveland, Hartford, and Santa Monica suggests that new political practices may be emerging in which planning plays a different and somewhat more prominent role than it had in the liberal regimes of the 1950s and 1960s. While not typical of political forces and leadership of the 1970s, this leadership bears examination. What these cities had in common was a combination of material conditions and political mobilization that may become increasingly common as the nation experiences economic difficulties in the next few years.

Economic Conditions

Report cities experienced a marked alteration in economic conditions during the 1960s and 1970s. In Hartford and Cleveland the main shift was in reduced central city income. As the relatively well-off moved to the suburbs, the remaining population tended to be poor, elderly, dependent, black, and Hispanic. By the mid 1970s both cities were near the top in indices of suburban-central city disparities. Even with massive redistribution, the average income in Cleveland remained below the federally defined poverty threshold.

In Berkeley and Santa Monica, the main problem was not poverty but climbing real estate prices fed by speculation. This not only put a severe squeeze on renters but also threatened to change the character of many middle class neighborhoods by making the conversion of single family dwellings to apartments economically appealing.

Political Mobilization

Previous city councils, even "liberal" ones, did little to alleviate these developments. This may seem too harsh an indictment given the identification of many liberal leaders with civil rights struggles and the enormous effort spent on expanding federal programs. Even so, after 1970, many liberal cities settled into bureaucratic routines, and their patterns of accommodation with business interests on such issues as tax abatements, urban renewal, highway construction, and service delivery began to seem increasingly irrelevant—even harmful—to their basic constituencies.

It was not surprising, therefore, that neighborhood movements burgeoned throughout the 1970s or that groups associated with health clinics, community energy coalitions, housing organizations, producer cooperatives, and women's organizations became politically more active and supported candidates for elective office. In Berkeley, a constellation of anti-war, student, and black groups formed the April Coalition. Members of this coalition were first elected to city council in 1967. Ten years later, the coalition gained effective control of the city government for a two-year period. In Hartford, neighborhood political activist Nicholas Carbone emerged to take leadership of the city council and city administration from 1969 to 1979, and Dennis Kucinich began an era of political populism in Cleveland by holding the mayor's office from 1977 to 1979. A renters' rights coalition in Santa Monica fought successfully for the adoption of rent control in 1979 and captured the mayor's office and a commanding majority of the city council.

Planning

Planning played an important role in these developments. "Progressive" candidates won government offices after highly programmatic campaigns. These candidates not only offered an alternative to government administrations that stressed management and process over substance, but they also used sophisticated methods of analysis to determine their positions on housing, employment, and other important issues. A group of planners trained at Berkeley in the 1960s were heavily involved in the electoral movement there. Their book, *The Cities' Wealth*, took its point of departure from Ebenezer Howard. Norman

Krumholz's work in Cleveland prefigured much of Kucinich's progressive program. In Hartford, Carbone, unlike most political leaders, became a planner, and Derek Shearer, past manager of the Santa Monicans for Renter Rights campaign and planning faculty member at UCLA, later became an active force in Santa Monica's Planning Commission.

Progressive municipal politics, unlike its liberal counterparts, challenged fundamental premises of capitalist economics: unbridled market function and the sanctity of private property. Progressive officials were willing to re-think issues without accepted liberal and conservative blinders. They asked quite rationally, "What will most benefit our majority constituency?" and came up with limitations on private sector prerogatives and alterations of a free market economy.

These shifts in perspective resulted in an astonishing range of innovation both in public-private economic arrangements and in city administration. Berkeley and Santa Monica instituted rent control. Cleveland halted tax abatements and saved the public municipal electric utility. Santa Monica put a moratorium on land development while it worked out arrangements for sharing the speculative profits of developers. Still other public-private land development partnerships were initiated in Hartford.

Numerous innovations in city administration included Berkeley's citizen budget review commission. This group redistributed budget cuts so that the effects would be felt by all income groups, not just the poor. Hartford experimented with district police teams, and Santa Monica instituted an anti-crime program that included neighborhood participation. Despite tension, progressive administrations mostly supported the efforts of neighborhood groups. They also opened up economic opportunities for new forms of entrepreneurship, particularly in areas like energy and food production and distribution.

A Progressive Future?

Much of this innovation offended businessmen, liberals, and others, and after 1979 reaction set in. Yet these experiences are valuable because the substitution of socially-oriented rationality for that of private business interests made pragmatic innovations possible. Like the earlier progressives, these

progressives adapted the local economy to public purposes, and opened up new economic opportunities for the most forward looking segments of the population.

Inevitably the United States will have to embark on a new urban policy—a real urban policy, not simply a set of subsidies to the private sector or the creation of more bureaucracies. Such a policy could create a new kind of economic rationality, incorporate new and vigorous economic sectors, mobilize a corps of skilled organizer/administrators capable of marrying public and private interests, and encourage increased local participation. Because all these things have happened in Cleveland, Santa Monica, Berkeley, and Hartford, progressive local politics will provide a crucial fund of experience for the future.

Professor Pierre Clavel did research during his 1981 fall sabbatical on cities that had progressive majorities and is currently writing a book on his findings.

Summer Institute on Historic Preservation Planning

The Summer Institute on Historic Preservation Planning will be celebrating its twentieth anniversary this summer. Professor Barclay Jones, co-founder, continues to direct the Institute, and Professor Michael Tomlan is the co-director.

The Institute, an intensive one-week program in preservation planning theory and practice, is designed as a serious introduction to the field of Preservation Planning. Opening lectures on historical background and philosophy will define the development of the preservation field. The topics considered include: problems surrounding the documentation of cultural resources; social, economic, and legal techniques; and governmental procedures at federal, state, and local levels. Case studies of successful and unsuccessful projects will be analyzed on the final day.

The Institute has a staff of about twenty distinguished specialists and is offered in cooperation with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information write to: Summer Institute on Historic Preservation Planning, Cornell University Summer Session, B12 Ives Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.

New Titles From PURS

The Program in Urban and Regional Studies (PURS) is offering several new publications this spring: *Financing Community Economic Development*, by Richard Schramm, (\$6.00); *Methods of Regional Analysis*, by Walter Isard, reissued in softcover (\$4.75); and *Current Issues in Historic Preservation Planning*, edited by Ian Stewart, (\$5.00).

Five new titles have also been added to the *Discussion in Environmental Health Planning Series*. In addition, the department initiated the *Cornell Planning Reprints*. About eighty titles are available (\$2.00 per reprint).

A complete list of PURS publications is available through their office (209 W. Sibley Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853).

Short Cites

"Running the City for the People," by Eve Bach, Nicholas R. Carbone, and Pierre Clavel, was published in the Winter, 1982, issue of *Social Policy*.

Michael Tomlan was a guest on Bob Callahan's show "The Old Houseworks." The program, which was produced at the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting in Owings Mills, Maryland, has appeared nationally this spring on thirty PBS stations.

John Reps presented four lectures on the History of American Urban Planning and City Development during the week of March 29, 1982, as a Hanes/Willis Visiting Scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The lectures, which included slides from Reps' extensive collection, were "South of Eden in the Cities of the Plain: Early Town Planning in Georgia and the Carolinas"; "The Saint Who Married an Angel: Brigham Young and Mormon Urban Development in the Settlement of the West"; "Present at the Creation: Daniel Burham and the Genesis of Modern American Planning"; and "Heavenly Vistas: Bird's Eye View of Sunbelt Communities." Reps also gave the Turpin Bannister Lecture at a meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians' chapter in Troy, New York, on February 11, 1982. The lecture topic was "Early City Planning in the Twentieth Century: The Chicago Plan of 1909." An exhibition of 116 historic plans, maps, and views was given in his honor at the School of Architecture, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Harry Sterling (Ph.D. '79) is director of a National HomeCare Council project to develop a service delivery model in Detroit, Michigan, for community based long term care for people with developmental disabilities.

Sid Saltzman recently presented two papers written with Steve Caldwell of Cornell's Sociology Department. They were "Microsimulation and Regional Science," at the Regional Science Meeting in Montreal, Canada, on November 13-15, 1981; and "Modelling Regional Energy-Economic-Demographic Interrelationships," at the Operations Research Society of America/Institute of Management Sciences meeting in Houston, Texas, in October, 1981. This past fall, Saltzman directed a project that measured the distributional effects on households of the deregulation of natural gas prices. The project was conducted by Mathematica Policy Research and sponsored by the Department of Energy.

William W. Goldsmith presented papers related to enterprise zones at the following conferences: Northeast Regional Science Association, Binghamton, May 15, 1982; Planners Network, Buffalo, April 24, 1982; National Youth Employment Coalition, Washington, D.C., April 5, 1982; and the Annual Conference of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Washington, D.C., October 22-24, 1981. He was also the keynote speaker at a Planners Network Panel in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 7, 1982.

John Forester convened a session on Critical Theory, Planning Theory, and Planning Practice at the Symposium on Social Change sponsored by the University of Cincinnati's Department of City and Regional Planning on April 28-29, 1982. Also involved in the symposium were **Jon Lang** (Ph.D. '77), who presented a paper on "Evaluating Neighborhood Quality: Methodological and Ethical Issues," and **Catherine Ross** (Ph.D. '79) who was a discussant on a panel on Urban Impacts of State and Federal Policies.

An essay by **Ian Stewart**, "Politics of Creating Central Park," appeared in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Fall, 1981, publication, *The Art of the Olmstead Landscape*.

K. C. Parsons has been consulting on a Mexican government project for modernizing Mexico's food distribution system. This project includes the design of facilities for collection and grading of produce in rural areas as well as for innovative wholesale and retail produce and meat markets in Mexico City and other urban areas.

Barclay G. Jones directed a Seminar on the Protection of Historic Architecture and Museum Collections from Earthquakes and Other Natural Disasters held at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. Invited papers on vulnerability assessment, preventative measures, emergency measures, and policy issues were presented by architects, engineers, conservators, museum administrators, and security specialists. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Architectural Research Centers Consortium, Inc., under a grant from the National Science Foundation (March 29-30, 1982). Jones also presented a paper, "Planning for the Reconstruction of Earthquake Stricken Communities," at a workshop on Earthquake Disaster Mitigation Through Architecture, Urban Planning, and Engineering, in Beijing, China, last November; and was a participant in two earthquake-related colloquia—one in Rome (October 12-16, 1982) and another in Berkeley (February 23-24, 1982).

Doctoral candidate **Hooshang Amirahmadi** presented a paper, "Theory of Non-Capitalist Path of Development," at a conference on Iran: Revolution, Social Classes, Imperialism, held at the American University, Washington, D.C., on April 3-4, 1982.

Robert M. Leary (MRP '57) received the Distinguished Professional Achievement Award from the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association. Leary is president of Robert M. Leary and Associates of Raleigh, North Carolina, and a visiting lecturer at the School of Design, North Carolina State University.

CRP's *Working Paper #55*, "A Planning Agenda for Urban Black Communities," is a collection of papers from a course taught by **R. Joyce Whitley**. Students whose work is included are **Carla D. Simmons**, **Beverly Ish-Renick**, **Keith Carter**, **Otelia DuBose**, **Eildert W. Stykel**, **Althea Seaborn**, **Sandra Clegg**, **Thea Young**, and **Jeffrey Johnson**.