A HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING (1948-1979), PART I[1]

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Mumford and Morris

The publication in 1938 of Lewis Mumford's book, *The Culture of Cities*, was one of the major events that led to the establishment of the Department of City and Regional Planning on the Berkeley campus of the University of California. At a time when the profession of city planning was in its infancy in the United States, it inspired a generation of Berkeley architecture and landscape architecture students to focus their idealism and energies on efforts to improve, protect, and enhance the cities and the natural environment of the San Francisco Bay region. Influenced and to a considerable extent educated by the events and implications of the Great Depression and World War II, they seemed to have no difficulty during the 1930's and 1940's in finding or organizing useful things to do, and in a relatively short time their efforts led to the expansion of city planning, housing, and community development programs in the San Francisco offices of FDR's New Deal administration and in the city and county governments of the Bay Area.

Mumford's book also had a major impact on University President Robert Gordon Sproul and Professor of Philosophy Stephen C. Pepper. Between 1938 and 1948, when the Department (DCRP) was finally established, they never failed to encourage the young leaders of the environmental design alumni group who had become as interested in city planning teaching and research as they were in professional practice, to present their views to the University's academic policy makers.[2] Several members of the informal but influential faculty Arts Club, founded by Professor Pepper in the early 1930's, were also actively interested in Mumford's ideas and were aware of the opportunities for creative city planning work in the world outside the campus. William W. Wurster, at the time a leading Bay Area architect, was responsive and very helpful, and subsequently became a major advisor, supporter, and academic colleague. President Sproul's close friends included faculty members in civil engineering, classics, public administration, law, and economics who also wanted to help and who found ways to do so during the ten year period of study and review that finally led to a favorable recommendation by the Committee on Educational Policy of the Academic Senate to establish an independent graduate teaching and research program in the field of city and regional planning.

For many Bay Area civic leaders, Mumford's book on the future of cities also encouraged a look backward. It stimulated a new awareness of the area's earlier tradition of independence, regionalism, and self-reliance (which unfortunately was later to be

misinterpreted by President Sproul's successor and others as provincialism). During the late 1930's and early postwar years, the revival of the Bay Area's strong sense of regional identity brought about a renewed appreciation of the outstanding architectural and civic design achievements of architects Bernard Maybeck and John Galen Howard on the campus, in Berkeley, and throughout the Bay Area; the city planning work done in the Bay Area between the Civil War and World War I by Olmsted, Burnham, and Willis Polk; and the significance of the Bay Area arts and crafts movement of the early 1900's that was based largely on the ideas and work of William Morris. Morris's environmental design concepts and his revolutionary social ideas, however imperfectly they may have been understood at the time, may be seen, together with Mumford's contributions, as the source of the inspiration that led to the creation of the University's Department of City and Regional Planning in Berkeley.

1948: Postwar City Planning Dreams

When the Department opened its doors on the campus in the fall of 1948, five students appeared—miraculously, it seemed—and the teaching, research, and community service activities of the new program, initially called "Civic Planning", began to take shape. The first regular student group in the two-year Master of City Planning (MCP) program included several GI's who were older than the department's first chairman and single full-time faculty member. Within a few years, and for a period that continued into the early 1960's, there were normally about 30 to 40 students, five to eight faculty members, and a wide range of interests expressed by the research and community activities of the faculty and students.

The form of the curriculum was influenced by MIT and Harvard where some members of the faculty had studied and taught. The substance of the field studies and studio work was concerned largely with Bay Area and California issues. Close ties were established with the League of California Cities and the County Supervisors Association, and for 16 years, between 1948 and 1964, one of the main missions of the department was concerned primarily with the organization and staffing of city and county planning departments and related agencies in the Bay Area and throughout the West. Faculty interests, of course, were much broader, with special attention being given from the outset to questions of city planning theory and of the nature of cities, particularly the large metropolis; to the cities of Latin America and the problems caused by rapid, massive urbanization; to urban design and aesthetics; to national housing and urban redevelopment programs; to the history of the growth and development of the cities and the metropolis of the Bay Area; and to the continuing educational needs of citizen commissioners, especially in the Bay Area, where, since the 1930's, there have been more than four hundred active commission members

serving at any given time.

Shortly after the appointment of W.W. Wurster as dean of the School of Architecture in 1950, studies began that led to the organization of the College of Environmental Design in 1959. This pioneering academic enterprise, the first in the world, was a direct outgrowth of experience gained in the practice of the related professions in the Bay Area that had begun during the late 1930's and of the ideas of Le Corbusier, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Patrick Geddes, among others, as well as Mumford and Morris. Members of the Department participated fully in the debates and committee work that preceded the creation of the College, and made major contributions to the cooperative effort that was needed especially during its early formative years.

About joining the College, there was open intellectual disagreement among faculty members of the Department concerning the appropriateness of giving up the independence that had been enjoyed since 1948, and concerning what seemed to some to be the conceptual limitations that might develop if the expanding field of city planning were to become too narrowly identified with the obviously dominant physical environmental concerns and mission of the College. By this time the Department faculty had increased considerably in size, and strong differences had become apparent concerning the nature of cities, the scope and role of the profession, and the content and structure of the curriculum. Faculty members, in order of their appointments between 1948 and 1960, were Kent, Violich, Williams, Scott, Bauer, Foley, Jones, Webber, Schmid, and Cooke. Faculty members in related fields who regularly offered courses for DCRP students and visiting professors from other countries and other U.S. universities assured intellectual diversity.

During the first 16 years of the Department's program, city planning practice in the Bay Area and northern California became well established and its leading practitioners, among whom were a number of early DCRP graduates, played major roles in professional affairs at the national level. City and county general plans and capital improvement programs became accepted local government concepts, civic design and urban development standards were raised, and thousands of citizen planning commissioners, many of whom subsequently became legislators, became involved and knowledgeable in environmental affairs. Faculty members were directly involved, frequently on different sides, in the Bay Area's early freeway revolts, the BART regional rapid transit project, a metropolitan greenbelt program, and the work that led to the establishment of the Association of Bay Area Governments, one of the nation's earliest—and for many years strongest—metropolitan regional planning organizations to be supported by local governments. The Department thus contributed in no small way to the emergence during the 1960's of the broadly based, powerful environmental movement in the Bay Area that accomplished the

miracle of saving the Bay and alerted the Nation to the potentially disastrous environmental and social dangers that could be caused by the lack of comprehensive, long-range city and regional planning in the public interest.

During this initial period in the Department's history there was also a brutal awakening on the campus, starting in 1949, caused by the postwar hysteria of McCarthyism and the Korean War of 1950-52, that exposed the human frailties of the faculty and prepared some for the turbulent years that were to come later. What was to become known as "The California Loyalty Oath Controversy," dominated and disrupted campus life for six long years. DCRP faculty, staff, and students had to learn that controversy on the Berkeley campus had at times to be accepted as a way of life. For some this was possible, indeed, stimulating; for others, it was distracting and seemed a waste of time and energy. But the Department survived and many unexpected lessons were learned—the curriculum in those days proved to be far more comprehensive than had been originally intended.

Also during this period members of the DCRP community were painfully aware that major city planning disasters were taking place in the Bay Area and elsewhere in the U.S. The loss of the Santa Clara Valley during the first postwar decade to the powerful forces of suburban sprawl was an agonizing defeat for local government and for city and regional planning. And the exposure of the fatal, anti-social flaws in central city redevelopment programs during the following decade revealed professional shortcomings that more than matched the bland lack of awareness of the middle class voters whose city council members continued to support unworkable programs long after it became evident that they were going to be stopped, sooner or later.

Expansion, FSM, and The Great Society

Early in the 1960's the Department entered its second major period of expansion. With generous administrative support which continued through the decade, new programs were made possible in the fields of urban design, regional planning, and housing; joint degree programs were developed with public health, law, architecture, and landscape architecture; the Ph.D. program was begun; a campuswide research institute was created; additional undergraduate courses were organized; the regular M.C.P. program was given additional support; the DCRP extension program was greatly expanded; and the departmental library was strengthened as it joined the CED library in new quarters. Mocine, Dyckman, Wheaton, Teitz, Duhl, Heyman, Meier, Cohen, Meyerson, Montgomery, Appleyard, Lee, Alonso, and Collignon joined the faculty during the academic years between 1960 and 1970. The student body grew from approximately 40 to 140 in a few short years, as class sizes were more than tripled and space was more than doubled. In retrospect, it cannot be doubted that the confusion caused by so

many major changes in such a short time contributed to the general campus-wide conditions that led to the student rebellions that began in Berkeley in 1964.

Shortly after DCRP made its move in 1964 to the new environmental design building that was later to be named Wurster Hall to honor William Wilson Wurster and Catherine Bauer Wurster, who died in a tragic hiking accident on Mt. Tamalpais. For a brief but intense period, the members of the greatly enlarged Department faculty, staff, and student groups were brought closely together almost at the very moment, early in December of that year, when the campus itself was about to explode as a result of what became known as the Free Speech Movement (FSM).

The activist liberal programs of the federal government between 1960 and 1968 that were known as "The New Frontier" and "The Great Society" certainly seemed for a time to have serious meaning for millions of Americans, especially students, and in particular students in a field such as city and regional planning, however one might define it. But the good intentions of the Kennedy/Johnson years began to be challenged seriously on campuses nationwide when it became apparent that Berkeley's FSM was only the beginning of what was to be a decade of major social upheavals. At the beginning, who could have foreseen that a number of the outstanding activists in what has become the environmental movement would be among the leaders of the major groups in the anti-war coalition, and that the environmental movement itself would continue to grow in significance and strength as the years went on?

DCRP suffered from the wrenching stresses and strains of these years probably more than most other departments because its students and faculty members were involved in so many well-intentioned programs as well as in so many of the major rebellions. But the period of freedom from normal concepts and normal routines was also a creative time for many students and members of the faculty; undoubtedly many constructive things were made possible by the turbulent years between 1964 and 1974, when the period was ended symbolically by the first resignation of an American President.

The New Realities

Perhaps the most sweeping and lasting changes in the Department have come as a result of changes in the student body. For more than ten years now approximately half of the department's students have been women, and almost one third have been from Black and other minority groups. And while the Latin American student group, with DCRP from the beginning, has continued without major changes, there are more students from other countries, and they have become more representative of their changing national societies. Students such as these, many with experience in the Peace Corps and Vista as workers in urban and rural slums in the U.S. and throughout the world, did not hesitate to shape their

own programs of study during the years after the FSM when the department had no organized curriculum. And after graduation they quickly moved into a wide range of new planning programs with public and private organizations such as the World Bank, HEW, OEO, UNESCO, and "think tanks" such as the Rand Corporation, as well as with city governments as they recovered from the riots of the 1960's and the new public and private environmental, housing, energy, and transportation programs created during the 1970's.

In many ways the new realities, driven home by case studies such as Caro's *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, and the recognition of the fundamental changes that will be caused by the long-term worldwide population, food, and energy crisis, seem to lead back to the kind of questions posed by Mumford and Morris decades ago which were in the minds of some when the proposals to establish DCRP was being considered during the years of the Depression and World War II. The realities facing city and regional planning students at the beginning of the 1980's that are now widely recognized seem to be of a more basic nature—more fundamental for our earth and for our society and the entire world—than those that have had to be faced by any previous student generation.

Old Cities, New Programs

By 1974, a return to the central cities was under way, regional anti-sprawl greenbelts were being reconsidered, and public transportation systems were being reorganized and expanded. The auto age seemed to be ending, less than 75 years after it began. Cities and metropolitan regions that had somehow survived the postwar years of suburban spread and sprawl were now being rediscovered, neighborhood by neighborhood, and were being renewed. Today, new teaching and research programs concerned with such activities are being developed, debated, and tested in many different departments and research centers on campus.

In recent years, faculty members have been appointed whose interests reflect the new worldwide interest in cities, developing regions, and environmental, social and economic constraints. Members who joined DCRP in the 1970's included Allan Jacobs, present departmental chairperson, Dickert, Dodson, Perlman, deNeufville, Markusen, Dowall, and Gellen. In 1979, the entire faculty, representing a very wide spectrum of interests and experience, was engaged in the first sustained attempt since 1964 to reestablish a core curriculum and a limited number of fields of specialization within the two-year MCP program. Students participated in this work, the first results of which were offered to the incoming class in the fall of 1979.

No history of DCRP, however brief, would be complete without mentioning the key role played in its growth and development for 18 years by departmental secretary Sallie Walker, who died in 1977.

From 1959 until 1977—a period that spanned the first three stages (some have called them "kingdoms") of the department's development—Sallie Walker was a creative, strong, loyal member of the University community. She was interested in and active in every aspect of DCRP affairs, but none more so than the welfare of DCRP's students; she was the department's self-appointed, sympathetic, and wonderfully successful alumni secretary, par excellence, whose spirit and organizing ability brought everyone together every few years, usually at the Berkeley Yacht Club, for some of the most memorable of DCRP's tribal gatherings.

During the 1978-9 academic year, the DCRP faculty found itself in almost complete agreement for the first time in more than fifteen years on questions of major importance involving the breadth of the field of city planning and the role of the creative professional practitioner as a university faculty member. Viewed against the Department's relatively brief 31 years of existence as a university program, this might have significance for the future. Only time would tell. But for DCRP students of the next several years, and for interested undergraduate and graduate students in other departments on the campus, it suggested— at least to the author of this essay—that after years of questioning, doubting, and necessary but exhausting negativism, a period of constructive academic work might once again be under way.

NOTES

[1] This brief essay was written in August 1979, primarily for students in the College of Environmental Design. A second part, coauthored by Frederick Collignon and to be printed in the next issue of this journal, will bring the history of the Department up to the present, expand it somewhat, and make whatever revisions are necessary. Comments, suggestions and criticisms, therefore, are very much desired and will be welcome.

It will be apparent that it has not been possible in the attached brief statement to name the faculty members who have served in departmental, college, and campus-wide administrative leadership positions, departmental lecturers and visiting professors, members of the extension, library, and office staffs, teaching and research assistants, and members of the large and growing group of DCRP alumni, without whom the events described in the preceding pages never would have taken place.

[2] See *The Planning Pioneers,* an essay by DCRP Professor Emeritus Francis Violich, in "California Living," February 26, 1979, for an historical account of the environmental design group, which became known as *Telesis*. The individuals referred to above were T.J. Kent, Jr., who founded the Department in 1948, Francis Violich, Sydney Williams, Corwin Morine, and William Spangle.