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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 13

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As we approach the beginning of a new millennium, planning for social equity remains an important and relevant subject of planning inquiry and practice. Amazing technological advances in the tools for communication, industrial production, data processing and research, combined with the rise of democratic governance processes, have transformed the ways in which society functions. Devastating wars, shifts in political and economic borders, population movements, and environmental disasters have contributed to changes in social and physical landscapes. Today we are faced with a process of uneven development and persistent concentrated pockets of poverty within dynamic and growing regions.

These patterns of development have led us to choose social equity and its relationship to planning as the theme for this year's issue of the *Berkeley Planning Journal*. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, planning for equity and social change became a mainstay of the profession, prompted by creative thinkers such as Paul Davidoff and Norman Krumholz. The parallel move away from purely physical planning to more social policy-oriented planning left salient imprints on city landscapes, through programs for affordable housing, public transit, and local economic development.

Yet in the 1980s and 1990s, a return to pragmatic, technical planning, in conjunction with a distancing from overtly social or redistributive policy-making, has dampened enthusiasm for equity in planning. Perhaps the triumph of market-oriented policies has caused equity planning to be associated with government inter-ventionism, and to be seen as somewhat "passé." On the other hand, perhaps the gains of past equity planning have made new efforts seem less necessary.

But what exactly is equity? It is clear that the economic, social, political, and historical complexity of urban processes defy simple generalizations about this concept. Indeed, the notion of equity has different meanings, facets, and uses, and it is measured in different ways. Is equity the principle that everyone must be treated equally, or is it the idea that people must be treated differently in order to be

made more equal? Both of these views draw on ideas of fairness, but lead to radically different policy prescriptions.

Indeed, the concept of equity has been framed and analyzed in various ways by planning scholars and practitioners. While certain researchers place equity at the center of their analysis, others treat the issue more peripherally. Some scholars consider social equity as a trade-off with efficiency. To many, this either/or approach obscures the issue at hand, and as a result, limits the opportunity for constructive solutions to complex matters. They argue that equity and efficiency should be placed on the same plane, as parallel objectives that can enhance rather than impede each other.

Another key argument rests on whether equity is treated as a process or an outcome: should good planning *result* in equitable policies, or should the *process* of planning be more equitable? Again, a narrow either/or approach is unlikely to address the question in a satisfactory manner. Rather, as several articles in this issue show, both the process and the outcomes reflect equity in planning. The papers in this issue incorporate the equity question in various innovative ways into their analyses of very different kinds of urban issues, from planning for public transit to neighborhood development, and basic urban services such as water supply.

Elizabeth Deakin's opening essay sets the stage, showing how varied the concept of equity is in time and space, and in the history of planning practice. In her view, planning for social equity is a process that can lead to better outcomes, providing room for alternative choices. Deakin argues that the democratization of planning and decision-making processes — through cooperative approaches — is key. She concludes that the increased use of capacity-building and consensus-based processes, in a variety of planning applications, can lead to broader democratic participation and to greater social equity.

Michael Garrett and Brian Taylor weave together equity and efficiency arguments to analyze the social consequences of recent shifts in transit investment priorities. They argue that current transit policy favors the development of expensive suburban commuter rail systems over the maintenance and expansion of existing of inner-city transit. As a result, the population that is dependent on transit — because it lacks the means or the ability to drive — is less well served by transit programs than affluent suburban residents who prefer to use their cars. Their analysis rests on a comprehensive review of the demographics of transit-users, and on a discussion of the politics that influence the policy process. In that sense, their

discussion draws both on the process and outcome facets of the equity question.

In his analysis of technology in neighborhood participatory planning, **Kheir Al-Kodmany** argues that residents know what is best for their communities. He shows that technological tools can be used to help residents communicate their needs, leading to a more comprehensive process of neighborhood planning. Al-Kodmany describes how the resources of a Geographic Information System (GIS) were combined with the talents of a graphic artist to stimulate participatory planning in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. This process helped residents to visualize past, present, and future neighborhood conditions, better enabling them to direct the work of the planners and designers. Kodmany thus shows that by combining traditional and computerized visualization tools into such a participatory process, citizens become experts, and sophisticated technology becomes a conduit rather than a barrier to communicative planning.

Isabelle Fauconnier reviews the theoretical and policy debates behind the global wave of infrastructure services privatization, focusing specifically on water and sanitation services. She notes that equity considerations have received scant attention in the privatization debate, despite their obvious relevance for such a basic service. She defines equity in water services along three dimensions: physical access to safe drinking water, economic access or affordability, and access to planning and decision-making for the service. Hence, Fauconnier's approach also treats equity as both an outcome (better distribution of services among low-households) and a process (through citizen input in services planning). She argues that equity should not have to be a trade-off with efficiency. Rather, clearly articulated equity objectives can be planned in conjunction with efficiency goals, and privatization may bring about equitable outcomes for users if appropriate incentives, pricing structures, and regulation are in place.

Combining 18th and 19th century political thought with an analysis of current socio-political processes, **Robert Ogilvie** draws on the contributions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Alexis de Toqueville, and Friedrich von Hayek. He discusses the role of morality and individual voluntary action in the resolution of modern social ills. Rather than depending on centrally organized state welfare systems, he argues, society should encourage individual moral behavior and active volunteering to better itself. In his view, citizen participation can bring about a mutual

understanding, compassion, and individual responsibility that centralized bureaucracies cannot develop.

In a second section of this volume that moves away from the theme of equity, **Gary Fields** critically reviews urbanization thought. He explores the nature of urbanization and economic modernization by examining the role of trade, production, population, and state-building in the work of several important urban theorists: Fernand Braudel, Jan de Vries, Paul Hohenberg, and Lynn Hollen Lees. Fields argues that while population shifts played a decisive role in urban development and in the transition to industrial modernity, these shifts are best understood in conjunction with the impacts of trade patterns, production activities, and state-building processes.

The final section of this issue is devoted to the review of several recently published books that focus on different aspects of the equity question in the United States and abroad. **William Eisensein** gives us insight into Keith Pezzoli's *Human Settlements and Planning for Ecological Sustainability.* **Michael Reilly** critiques Mike Davis' take on natural disaster tainted by social and political processes in *Ecology of Fear*, while **Paul Peninger** examines the strengths and weaknesses of Scott Cummings' *Left Behind in Rosedale*. Finally, **Nashua Kalil** offers praise for Alan Wolfe's attempt to explain the American middle-class in *One Nation After All*.

The analyses presented in this issue show that without a direct concern for inequalities, policies and programs may in fact reproduce existing inequalities. They offer varied discussions of what equity may be, the different ways in which the issues can be framed and understood, and the alternative solutions that can be created, moving away from the simple dichotomies of process versus outcome and equity versus efficiency.

Planning for social equity challenges us to understand the influence that history has on social and economic differentiation. Such planning tries to remedy the negative outcomes from the processes that have disproportionate impacts on certain groups and geographic areas. The breadth and depth of these outcomes are complex challenges, for which planners can work to develop creative solutions. Planners can help to create and maintain sustainable communities that are built on partnerships, allowing people to help themselves and transform their distressed communities from the grassroots up.