

The Seventh Generation

In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.
- From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

The Origins and History of PN

by Chester Hartman

In 1970, I moved from the East coast (Cambridge) to the West coast (San Francisco). While it was, for me, a very satisfying change of venue, as a lifelong Easterner (seventeen years in the Bronx, followed by seventeen years in the Boston area), out there I increasingly felt somewhat removed from things, in particular from my planning colleagues. At the time, I was on the staff of the National Housing Law Project (then part of the Univ. of California Berkeley Law School, later to go independent), dealing with a range of housing justice issues. So in 1974 I contacted about three dozen planner friends to raise the idea of some kind of communications network among progressive planners. In the nineteen sixties, we had Planners for Equal Opportunity (PEO), the rewarding and effective collection of such folks that Walter Thabit, one of the original advocate planners working in the Cooper Square neighborhood of New York, put together. PEO had significant positive impact on the planning profession and programs such as urban renewal and public housing, raising in particular issues of race and class justice. But as the sixties faded into the seventies, PEO faded.

The response I got was positive. So I applied for a small grant to "Ping" Ferry and Carol Bernstein, those wonderful funders of social change groups and got one of their famous responses: a check (\$2500 — more would come later) with an encouraging note on the stub — no hassle, no waiting. In August 1975, I sent out the first mailing, as I recall to about 300 persons — names provided by the friends I first queried, plus some names from Walter's list. And that is how it all began.

I had occasional local help with mailings and maintaining the mailing list. But it was essentially a one-man operation, taking up maybe six to eight hours a month — most of it laboriously typing the various submissions people sent in. The bimonthly newsletter [Cont. on page 4]

The Future of PN

by Tom Angotti

I agree with Chester Hartman that Planners Network's development in recent years has been healthy. PN is increasingly recognized as a progressive voice in planning. The newsletter has evolved into a magazine with lots of contributions that challenge the staid and push the boundaries of professional practice. We have an active editorial board and student assistants. (Happily, Ann Forsyth has stepped in as Co-Editor while I'm out of the country until August, 2002). The PN conferences are always exciting because they engage communities and go beyond a talking heads format. PN's new web site is up and running. We are starting to have a consistent presence at professional conferences. The New York City and Toronto chapters are busily working with other progressive organizations and planning schools on local initiatives. PN has developed ties to like-minded Brazilian and Argentine planners, and Rachel Bland is working on a chapter in Europe.

While the center of PN moved to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, the secret to our success has been the leadership coming from an increasingly active Steering Committee. This wasn't always the case, and it has taken some time to establish the principle that our governing body is more than honorific. Our growth is also attributable to generous support from many conference funders, in particular the Fannie Mae Foundation.

But PN has reached a crossroads. It's not sustainable as currently constituted. Our greatest asset is the incredible volunteer labor that keeps us going, but that is also our deficit. To make any more progress, we need to have paid staff.

I think PN's political voice is still weak. We need to be more consistent when we engage and confront the professional organizations. We need to strengthen ties with other progressive organizations on national [Cont. on page 4]

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Statement of Principles

The Planners Network is an association of professionals, activists, academics, and students involved in physical, social, economic, and environmental planning in urban and rural areas, who promote fundamental change in our political and economic systems. We believe that planning should be a tool for allocating resources and developing the environment to eliminate the great inequalities of wealth and power in our society, rather than to maintain and justify the status quo. We are committed to opposing racial, economic, and environmental injustice, and discrimination by gender and sexual orientation. We believe that planning should be used to assure adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, jobs, safe working conditions, and a healthful environment. We advocate public responsibility for meeting these needs, because the private market has proven incapable of doing so.

PLANNERS NETWORK

The Magazine of Progressive Planning

No. 150

www.plannersnetwork.org

Winter 2002

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GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Planners Network seeks articles that describe and analyze progressive physical, social, economic and environmental planning in urban and rural areas. Articles may be up to 2,000 words. They should be addressed to PN's broad audience of professionals, activists, students and academics, and be straightforward and jargon-free. Following a journalistic style, the first paragraph should summarize the main ideas in the article. A few suggested readings may be mentioned in the text, but do not submit footnotes or a bibliography. The editors may make minor style changes, but any substantial rewriting or changes will be checked with the author. A photograph or illustration may be included. Submissions on disk or by email are greatly appreciated. Send to the Editor at tangotti@hunter.cuny.edu or Planners Network, c/o Hunter College Dept of Urban Planning, 695 Park Ave., New York, NY 10021. Fax: 718-636-3709. Deadlines are January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1.

UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUES [Articles welcome]:

The New Urbanism
Just and Sustainable Transportation
A Critical View of Community/University Partnerships
Is There an Energy Crisis and Why?

Hartman [Cont. from page 2] was largely a compendium of items “members” wanted others to know about — their work, problems, readings, etc. All costs — basically, printing and mailing — were covered by voluntary contributions by those receiving the newsletter. And we kept growing as more and more people learned about PN or were referred to us by “members.” I use that word in quotes because for the first few years there was nothing resembling an organization, just the newsletter, the sense of community it provided and in localities such as Boston, New York, SF, LA and Chicago, where there were concentrations of PNers, occasional local activities, such as forums, films, speakers, social events, technical assistance. We also published an occasional roster with short bio sketches, facilitating one-on-one contacts.

The first move toward making PN an organization was the 1979 Cornell conference on progressive planning, the papers for which were published as *Urban and Regional Planning in an Age of Austerity*, edited by Pierre Clavel, John Forester and William Goldsmith (Pergamon, 1980) — still a useful and relevant collection. Then, in 1981, came PN’s first national conference, at the 4-H Center outside Washington, DC, attended by about 150 people. There we adopted a formal Statement of Principles, intended not as a blood oath but as an understanding of general political agreement among the membership. We set up several working groups, one of which resulted in *Critical Perspectives on*

Angotti [Cont. from page 2] and local levels. It is too easy for professionally-based groups to go out on their own and lose ties with the movements that are together able to make inroads in the achievement of “fundamental social change,” which our statement of principles declares to be our objective.

It is important to preserve the networking in PN. Our members tell us they benefit from this aspect of the organization. But it is now time to move beyond the network. Our ultimate purpose isn’t self-enrichment but to bring about social change. Our networking with other planners and activists should be imbued with a higher purpose — protesting injustice, supporting progressive legislation, and pro-

Housing (Temple Univ. Press, 1986), the progressive housing reader I co-edited with PNers Rachel Bratt and Ann Meyerson.

In 1995, a few years after I relocated from San Francisco to DC (where I finally brought in some part-time paid assistance), I turned the whole operation over to Tom Angotti and colleagues at Pratt. It was a very healthy development: a new, elected Steering Committee; lots of new energy and an institutional base (Hunter now included) with the resources that brings; a longer, weightier, more substantive, less “chatty” publication, now transformed into this magazine; and all those terrific annual conferences.

Chester Hartman is Executive Director of the Poverty Race Research Action Council (www.prrac.org). He worked at the Institute for Policy Studies, taught at the University of North Carolina Planning Department, and has authored many publications. A collection of 32 of his past essays, with an autobiography/social history and a foreword by Jane Jacobs, entitled Between Eminence and Notoriety: Four Decades of Radical Urban Planning (Rutgers, Center for Urban Policy Research) is due out in February 2002. An updated edition of his book, City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco, will be published by University of California Press in May 2002. A new housing reader that he has co-edited with Rachel Bratt and Michael Stone will be published by Temple University Press in late 2002.

moting cutting edge practices that build the basis for fundamental change. At a time when war cries are used as a rationale to advance every right-wing agenda item, when racial profiling is once again legitimate, it’s time to redefine and renew our progressive purpose.

Final note: Our publication is still evolving. We’d like to hear your reactions to the new format and content. What do you like and what’s missing? Suggestions for improvements? We welcome small notes and lengthy articles.

Tom Angotti is Professor of Urban Affairs & Planning at Hunter College and Co-Editor of Planners Network.

Forsyth [Cont. from page 1] their specific interests and needs. Children in low-income neighborhoods battle with poverty and exclusion; in middle income neighborhoods they may be seen as disorderly.

How much can children and youth participate? Although limited by language and motor skills, children at the age of three have demonstrated the ability to build models and create mental maps. While environmental awareness is fairly basic at this age, even very young children have a capacity to participate and this ability develops with age. The process of being involved in planning and neighborhood projects can help children and youth develop a sense of the consequences of actions and a sense of self and others. Among older youth such participation can build skills for later community involvement.

Youth involvement in planning is not just about personal and civic development, however, but about creating places and communities. Children are the dominant users of some spaces such as parks, playgrounds and schools. As teenagers they are often perceived by adults as problem users of public spaces, but their intimate experience with such locations makes them uniquely suited to make decisions about them. As Imre Kepes, Fernando Marti and Llewellyn Golding demonstrate in their inspiring case studies of YouthPower, the HOME’s Skateboard Task Force and the Youthlink violence prevention program, the rewards to both the young people and the wider community can be significant. In my work with the Urban Places Project at U.Mass/Amherst in the mid to late 1990s, I was tremendously privileged to watch the young people in YouthPower overcome huge barriers of poverty and ethnic discrimi-

nation to physically improve their neighborhood. This in turn helped develop respect from the wider community. The High School Adoption program at the University of Texas/Austin is also notable in this light as it began the task of connecting young people to both the university and to community development groups from their neighborhood, bridging across racial lines (see the article by Teresa Vazquez in this issue).

Involving youth in planning is a challenge for progressive planners. Children and youth almost certainly have to involve people other than themselves, that is adults, in any significant planning work or projects. This creates a delicate balance where participation needs to be carefully designed to be interesting and also give power to youth directly, not only through adults. Planners are often inexperienced in the methods for including youth. Planners are also often ambivalent about youth contributions. Given other pressing concerns, youth may simply be ignored. This is in spite of the fact that as both Suzanne Speak and Kim Knowles-Yanez describe, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child makes participation a human right.

The APA Resources Zine, described here by its editor Ramona Mullahey, is an important on line resource for planners interested in involving youth. Other articles provide web links to resource groups, manuals, and details about their programs. The important first step is to realize that youth are important partners in planning.

Ann Forsyth is Associate Professor of Urban Planning at Harvard. She was a project manager for the YouthPower Guide—see ordering instructions on page 21.

Mark Your Calendars!!!

2002 Planners Network National Conference

Community-Based Planning for Urban Revitalization: Opportunities and Challenges

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June 13-16, 2002 at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA

Details on page 41 of this issue.