

// **PLANNING FOR DIVERSITY AND CHOICE** //

Possible Futures and Their Relations to the Man-Controlled Environment

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Normative Planning

PAUL DAVIDOFF

As we speak of inventing the future, it is revealing that we do not address ourselves to "preventing the future." The idea that the future is inventable suggests a bias toward both optimism and technological determinism. I question these biases.

As a planner, I am pleased that there is growing concern with thinking about the future. But I am afraid that much of this thinking may be devoid of knowledge and concern with the tremendous problems of poverty, discrimination, and war that beset our society at this time and will remain with us for some time in the future. I think that the futurists of today must be warned not to attempt to practice nonnormative planning.

Today's planning, both conventional agency work and the new concern with the year 2000 or beyond, tends to examine problems in essentially technical terms. But in masking the values underlying their proposals, the planners have weakened their plans. Contemporary comprehensive city plans are often quite unrealistic and appear so to the public precisely because their authors fail to come to grips with the basic issues that confront their society and split the members of the society into different political groups.

In city planning we have had a practice of a single planning body proposing a course of action. The community has then had a yes-or-no referendum: either they accept the plan, or they have no plan.

There has been strong reaction to this form of planning within our field in the past five or six years, and there seems to be a growing practice for planning agencies to make a point of con-

sidering alternative policies rather than a single "technically correct" plan. One who adheres to the recipe for good rational behavior would examine alternative policy choices rather than simply propose one rationally perfect plan.

A single agency, however, continues to be responsible for the discussion of alternative plans or alternative means for achieving a given end. The presentation of alternatives by a single agency still does not recognize the essential political element underlying a planning proposal, that the "general welfare" or the "public interest" is not a fact that can be discovered upon deep research. The identification of the public interest is always a contentious point. There are different views about how the public will best be served. Our practice in physical planning often has not accepted that debate; instead, there has been a concept that the technicians, the planners, might be able to develop a good plan or series of alternatives for the community. (The planning staff and planning commission may, of course, develop a good plan, but there is no objective measure of its goodness. Its evaluation in terms of serving the public is necessarily a political judgment. It is a choice of policy and a choice of what ought to be done for the community; as such it is subject to debate, or in a democracy it should be subject to debate, so as to permit different interests to react to the solution offered.)

The alternative to this monolithic agency proposal of plans is "plural planning," in which the determination of how the society ought to develop would not be the sole responsibility of a single public agency. Instead, many different groups within the society might participate in determining policy. "Determining" here means proposing, debating, deciding.

Plans for community development should be included in the platforms of political parties. For many reasons, however, the political parties want to remain as general as possible in their commitment so as not to lose popularity. They do not want to support specific ideologies. Since the political parties are incapable of developing plans themselves, other interest groups may be capable of proposing plans. The development of what has been called "advocate planning" recognizes this need for interest groups to express their demands in the form of plans.

Planners have begun to operate as professional advocates for neighborhood groups, developing alternative plans to the plans proposed by some public agency. This is a very healthy development, and one that we should take note of at this conference. As we find ourselves more and more concerned with the year 2000 and with specific commission plans for the year 2000 or some later time in the future, we should not expect that a plan for that year can come alone from the "best minds" in the country. One of these plans, that of the Commission on the Year 2000, prepared by a group of "experts," seems to represent a group of characters in search of a future. Here is a group of intellectuals, who, aside from the fact that they have some common background and training in being concerned with intellectual matters, have no real reason for coming together. They do not represent any interest at all, and it is not surprising that, at least so far, they do not seem capable of yielding a plan. There is no common interest that ties them together. They do not have a common political base.

The concept of pluralism in planning has both positive and negative features. In establishing a plural planning system, we have to guard against the abnegation of leadership. In proposing plural planning, we should not say that there is no role for the central planning agency. It will still have a vital role to play. The agency that produces the government plan will be better informed if it produces plans in the context of a societal process of considering what ought to be. The agency does have an important job in recommending what courses of action should be followed. It would be a mistake to minimize that central planning function or to recommend that it be transferred to the many different interests in the society. That would be an unwarranted dissipation of responsibility.

The central agency's role is to give direction; but it must recognize that its views are only one possible set of views. If the central planning agency is sophisticated, it will know how to take advantage of the alternatives proposed by outside groups. It will educate itself, both technically and politically, toward improving its own recommendations.

I should like to highlight my remarks regarding the need for

pluralizing planning by suggesting in their definitions of major problems central planning agencies have tended to accept value orientations favoring the present distribution of opportunities in society.

First, let us look at the present concern with urban life. We know that there are problems in the city because *Life* and *Look* have told us so. If we feel insecure with those magazines, the *Saturday Review* has also told us so. Recently, *U.S. News & World Report* told us that there was a crisis in our cities and indicated that we have to spend perhaps a trillion dollars in ten years to combat this problem.

The concern with urbanism is misplaced. The real crisis of our times is not an urban crisis. Instead, the crucial problem is a national problem, an international problem, a social problem. It is the fact of great social injustice. It is the fact that there is vast discrimination, poverty, and hunger. It is the fact that there is great hate, that the world is ready to blow itself up and is very close to doing so, and that very few people are trying to prevent us from destroying ourselves.

Many of these social problems are presently located in urban areas. The poor live increasingly in urban areas, both in our nation and in others. The problems may thus seem more apparent in urban areas, so we call them urban problems. We discover, though, that in "dealing" with urban problems, we are not often dealing with the problems of injustice, discrimination, and poverty. In fact, we are dealing with *other* problems peculiar to urban areas: the problems of congestion, problems of "uglification," to use Lewis Carroll's term, problems of high density and of pollution. But the basic problem that must be confronted is the unjust distribution of opportunities in our society. We cannot hope to solve this problem at the urban level. By focusing on the urban aspect of social problems, we avoid dealing with national distributional questions.

In all our discussions of the future so far at this conference there has hardly been any mention of distribution, whether of the present distribution of opportunities, of education, of health, of leisure time, of wealth and income, or of knowledge.

We live in a society that has accepted the conventional

wisdom of modern economists, whose main concern is with growth. The quality of our economy must be determined in terms not only of growth but of how the economy distributes its resources.

In our discussion earlier no one said that the present distribution is wrong or that we should do something to see that the poor get a greater share of what our society and other societies have to offer. Our assumption is that of John Kenneth Galbraith, who wrote in *The Affluent Society*:

. . . Few things are more evident in modern social history than the decline of interest in inequality as an economic issue. . . . While it continues to have a large ritualistic role in the conventional wisdom of conservatives and liberals, inequality has ceased to preoccupy men's minds. . . . In the advanced country, . . . increased production is an alternative to redistribution. And, as indicated, it has been the great solvent of the tensions associated with inequality. . . . Yet in this case the facts are inescapable. It is the increase in output in recent decades, not the redistribution of income, which has brought the great material increase, the well-being of the average man. And, however suspiciously, the liberal has come to accept the fact.¹

The inescapable fact to which Galbraith alludes does not lead to any inescapable conclusions concerning proper public policy. Galbraith comes to grips with the basic value problems by describing what has happened in economic thought, but his implied conclusion is that it is no longer necessary to consider the propriety of present distribution patterns. This is wrong. At a minimum a responsible evaluation of the quality of the national economy would always have to account for the distributional pattern as well as for the absolute quantity of wealth.

Our society is concerned with full employment and with economic growth. We argue whether we ought to have 4 per cent or 2 per cent unemployment, but the amount of employment or unemployment is itself not so significant as the question of who gets what from the society. In a society in which the unemployed were given a decent income, the problems of unemployment would have a different meaning than they do for us today.

¹ John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 15th ed., pp. 82, 96-97.

I ask for a greater sharing of the goods of the society: of knowledge, health, and wealth. I do not think it is necessary to argue, however, that everybody must have the same. We do not have to consider whether the society that we create will be too bland or whether we shall eliminate incentive.

What we should discuss is the question of whether it is or is not appropriate to maintain the present distribution of social goods. That issue, however, is never discussed. We assume that the present distribution is correct. It is probably a familiar fact that in our society the top 5 per cent of income earners earn three times as much as the bottom 20 per cent. The top 5 per cent earn 15 per cent, the bottom 20 per cent earn about 5 per cent, and the top 20 per cent earn almost ten times as much as the bottom 20 per cent. During the course of the period from the New Deal to the present, whatever redistribution has taken place took some money from the wealthiest group and gave it to the upper-middle-income group. Some resources went to the second quintile and some to the third quintile, but hardly anything has come down to the bottom 40 per cent. The figures since 1948 or 1950 show almost no change in the proportion the bottom 40 per cent received.

In the distribution of knowledge, of the opportunity to enjoy leisure time, we can find patterns quite similar. We know very well that the poor have very little opportunity to get out of the city to enjoy the great resort areas our country possesses. Dean Seifert has mentioned the great increase in airplane traffic. Only about a third of the American people have ever taken even one flight. We have a vast industry serving those of us who fly fairly often. We are only a small percentage of the population, yet a great deal of money from federal funds goes into support of the air travel industry. It is a fine industry, but the question is: Who has the opportunity to share its benefits?

Many may say that economic growth is enough. Some of us may disagree with that point of view; but the crucial point is that we should be debating the distribution issue. It shouldn't be hidden from view.

It is quite irresponsible on the part of any technician to come before the public to make a recommendation about how things

ought to be, unless he states very explicitly that the distribution pattern he proposes is the best one. He should say explicitly that in the society he proposes it is right that the poor shall get only their pittance and that this is the best solution for everyone.

It is quite apparent that many people who make solutions today would rather not be so explicit. It is difficult, even if you do believe that ours is the best distribution pattern, to have to admit it.

In our discussions of the future of a particular society or of world society I hope that the underlying social issues, of resource distribution for rich and poor, for warlike and peaceful purposes, for benefit to persons and institutions, will provide the focal point of discussion. This exploration of underlying issues will help us to avoid the myth of the planner as technical specialist, privy to vast secret information banks, who can set out futures for whole societies in a political vacuum. We are all politicians and ideologues, and I hope our conferences and our planning documents will admit and face this fact.

DISCUSSION

OZBEKHAN: A few years ago, I was hired to do rather basic research on the methodology of planning for General Electric. In none of my writings for the corporation was I allowed to use the word "planning," because it sounded socialistic. A great deal of difficulty is encountered in this field, especially when so many are engaged in planning. But I agree with you that many groups must plan, that pluralistic planning is a very good idea.

However, two fundamental things will have to change: the first is our mores. In this instance, the supposed liberalism of the nineteenth century has to be broken down in our minds before we can approach what you were talking about.

The second thing derives directly from the first. It is that the relationship between work and income has to be changed. That is the only way we can achieve any kind of more equitable distribution today, other than through growth.

DAVIDOFF: There are two issues here. First, about pluralism: I don't want to be understood as saying that everybody *has* to

plan. We are not going to make people plan. I hope that by suggesting that there can be more than a single central planning agency, it will be possible for the real estate boards, the Chambers of Commerce, the AMA, and the NAACP to get into the process of determining the future.

As to your last point, of course, there has to be a very great change in our mores. The very first group that has to change is the liberal intellectuals who for too long have accepted the liberal conventional wisdom of group growth and who haven't demanded that government concern itself at all times with the question of the propriety of any allocation of resources.

OZBEKHAN: No argument there. I believe Dr. Duhl touched on exactly the same point.

FRIEDEN: I am also in agreement with what you said about the importance of issues of distribution, but I would like to comment on the earlier part of your presentation. You spoke about the urban crisis and questioned whether it really exists and whether it is separable from these social issues.

It is one thing to say urban problems are very deeply embedded in social values and in issues of national policy. I agree with that. But if you mean to go further and to say that there really is nothing that needs to be done at the urban level, that we just have to worry about national policy and social values, I can't agree.

The way we build cities and the way we manage cities have a great deal to do with the distribution of opportunities and with issues such as racial and economic segregation. Our present urban arrangements have a great deal to do with denial of opportunities. If you want to take a broad national approach, there is an urban counterpart to it, and there should be urban policies consistent with national goals.

DAVIDOFF: We do have many functional agencies: HUD, HEW, and others. We spread out the responsibility for national social planning. We have no group responsible for developing a national social policy plan. The only thing that comes close to it is the Bureau of the Budget, which operates in secret. It doesn't open up issues for public debate. The Bureau of the Budget is not involved in a *public* planning process. What we desperately

need is an agency at the national level to do comprehensive economic and social planning for the nation; and we need its counterpart at the city level as well.

What I am really saying, though, is that I have a hunch that the concern with urban crises is moving us further away from coming to grips with the essential social problems.

FRIEDEN: But concern with the urban problems might be a way of broadening this.

DAVIDOFF: If so, I must cite a prediction that William Wheaton of the University of California made: If you want to create any progress, do it in the 1960's. By 1970 the suburbs will be in control of metropolitan areas. The suburbs will want metropolitan government, so they can control it. We will not have very liberal urban policies when that happens. I hope you are right about the need to deal with the urban issues. In any case, we have to establish the political coalitions to work toward the ends we desire.

S. ANDERSON: In Chicago, for example, there have been certain changes in policies about financing and ownership in Negro communities. This represents a partial redistribution; but, perhaps more importantly, it demonstrates that the Negro community is becoming effective in the transformation of even socially entrenched problems.

DAVIDOFF: Unfortunately, I have to say that, in fact, what the Negro gets in the North is very little. There has been very little progress, very little change. What really has happened to the Negroes in Chicago? How much has been opened to them as a result of all this tremendous pressure? What have they received? If we assume we are in agreement here, that the Negro deserves a better share of things, then I am not so sure we are making progress.

We allow relatively few people to get out of the slums and ghettos, and we don't yet have a conscious national policy to permit the Negro to live anywhere within a region at housing prices he can afford. That will take strong federal action.

S. ANDERSON: Are you saying that this condition argues against advocacy planning as mere mitigation of serious situations? All that operates through local communities is inadequate, and you

want central government planning to redistribute things dramatically?

DAVIDOFF: Yes. Many people will have to work very hard for a long time before we have a national policy that will accept that, but the end result should be greater equity.

S. ANDERSON: You are saying that advocacy planning has as its main role not the change, or mitigation, or improvement of the life of people in specific communities but rather the change of the political climate so that the central authorities will induce change.

DAVIDOFF: I think there is need for both activities to go on simultaneously. It may be a long time before there is a major shift in our national or international policies about the distribution of the goods in the world. In the interim we may be left to try to make things just slightly better in each community. But while we do that and while we continue the type of community work that advocate planning has represented in some communities, at the same time we must push for something much greater. Because he has not pushed hard on the essential issue, the liberal has no real policy, no strong conviction about what a better society would be.

BAUER: I guess I am in favor of humanity, justice, and the welfare of mankind, too; however, I want to be critical of uncritical criticism of conventional wisdom. I refer here to the joint issues of *distribution* and of *contribution*, and there is no more usual way to confuse the issues than to talk about the fact that only one third of the people have flown in an airplane and that a very small portion of the people fly their own airplanes; so, according to the rest of the argument, why should everybody else suffer because these people can afford to fly airplanes?

There are two assumptions. One is that flying in airplanes is a function of personal wealth, and the other is that the person is flying for his own pleasure. I don't know the precise figures, but I will guess that 90 per cent of the airplane-miles traveled are paid for by somebody else to get a man to go someplace and do some work. This is not consumption on the part of the flyer. This is supposedly related to his contribution to the general welfare. I do not pretend for a moment that the inequities in

the distribution of income reflect contribution to society. But I do think that there are some key places in our society where the demand for certain types of contributions by people exceeds what these people can genuinely contribute and that we ought to see whether or not the maintenance of some pretty stiff system of incentives is not required there. I would encourage a group such as the one we are in to think about this particularly when we consider the problems of leisure.

NEWMAN: The problem that we are faced with is that for the poor, the ability to express themselves by buying something or not buying it doesn't usually come into play at all. They just do not have the market mechanism for dealing with the problem.

You [Davidoff] suggested another mechanism, when you proposed alternative planning. You listed a series of agencies, and you said that they could prepare plans and various communities could prepare plans. But then the whole idea of the very poor competing in the plan-making market seems to be a problem again.

DAVIDOFF: I am glad you picked me up on that. The major reason why I became interested in advocacy planning was to see that the poor got some adequate representation in the planning process. In the last few years, there has been a rapid growth of advocacy planning in Negro communities, in ghettos, and in poor white communities as well. We have good examples of it here, such as Bob Goodman's work in Boston.² In New York the Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem has been working with neighborhood communities in developing their own renewal plans. Advocacy groups have come into existence in San Francisco, Syracuse, and probably in a number of other places. I think there is no question that it is the poor who are beginning to come into the planning process as a result of advocate planning. One of the problems is that they don't have the money to purchase any experts.

Foundation support is one obvious source of money for these efforts. The OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] is also giving some thought to working in the field of planning this

² R. Goodman, "Advocacy: A New Role for Architects and Planners," *World Architecture*, Vol. IV (1967), pp. 22-23.

year. It may want to move into the field of planning as it moved into medicine or as it established neighborhood law offices and sponsored legal action to help the poor. One of the things a number of us in planning education are trying to do — Bernard Frieden at M.I.T. and our group at Hunter — is to help develop planners who will be capable of working as advocate planners with community groups.

MAZLISH: I wonder if there isn't a logical inconsistency between something you said here and your other statements. Perhaps I misunderstood. I thought you said that what is public interest or public good was not a settled question; and, indeed, this point has come up in many of the conversations earlier. Then you go on, however, to talk as if, in fact, it were clear what the public interest was, in reference to equality, to integration, and so forth.

Now, I think most of us agree with your version of the public interest, and I would go so far as to say that we do know there is a general good. You may not be able to achieve it in public life. For example, I am against the oil depletion allowance for the petroleum industry. I have no doubt in my mind that it would be to the public good to get rid of this. As a practical matter, however, I can't bring this to pass. In short, we are playing games if we say we don't know what the public good is, and then say we want equality. The problem, of course, is complicated. For example, we want advocacy planning for the Negroes. Fine, but what about advocacy planning for, say, the Italian population in Boston, who, I am quite sure, don't want the Negroes in their area, and who see their whole way of life threatened by Negro integration — and the Italians, of course, are larger in number? We have to face a possible logical inconsistency, then, in our own values.

DAVIDOFF: I don't find an inconsistency. I believe everybody has a right to a lawyer. Maybe someday everybody will have a right to the services of an advocate planner. Certainly the group that opposes the Negro coming into the neighborhood has as much right as those who are proposing that the Negroes have a greater access to it. I don't believe our objective must be to verify some concept of the public interest or the public good. I

know what I believe, and I have expressed what I believe; but I can't state that it is true. I have no way of verifying the existence of that truth. Other people can certainly contest my version of the truth and argue on other grounds or about other things. I am asserting my own belief. All we can do is to be as persuasive as possible about our own beliefs. We can't impose our version of the truth on others.

BARNETT: I will try not to assert any of my own beliefs, merely facts. There are a number of studies that manifest concern for distribution. The authors include Robert Lampman and Burton Weisbrod of Wisconsin, Sar Levitan of Upjohn, Gunnar Myrdal, Herman Miller of Census, and many others.

Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago, for example, has come up with the notion of remedying the social injustice of poverty (which he did not define as you did; no one cares about the millionaire; what one cares about is the poor man). He came up with the notion of a negative income tax. He said: If you want to remedy poverty, focus on the *poor* people, not on farmers or the aged, many of whom are not poor. If it is poverty you want to remedy, then, just as you have a progressive income tax on high incomes, make payments on a progressive schedule to the people you identify as below the poverty line.

I want to ask you one question. How would you try to implement, in a rational way, any of the proposals that you described for a better distribution of the income?

DAVIDOFF: The easiest way would be a guarantee of a minimum income, a decent one, say \$7,000.

BARNETT: Then, what you are proposing happens to have been originated before by the advisor to Mr. Goldwater, who proposed a negative income tax.

DAVIDOFF: Any program that achieves the end of redistribution is fine with me. Taxes should be established to control the wealth passed from generation to generation. That money can be given back in the form of special programs or subsidies for the poor. I don't think it is difficult to establish the kinds of subsidies and remedial programs that are needed. Let me give you an example. I should like to see people with present incomes of less than \$3,000, \$4,000, or \$5,000 — you set the figure — have

decent housing in a decent environment. We need much more than 20,000 low-cost housing units a year. We need a million units or up to five million units a year to take care of the inadequate housing in our society. Everyone of any income should have access to a decent education. And one of my first goals in establishing distribution would be to work toward a situation where the distribution of deaths from sickness and accident would be the same for Negro and white.

BARNETT: You mentioned three things, and every one of them is now being decided in a political process. The question of education is being decided, and it may be that you want to change the process. If so, how or where? Education decisions are now being made. Maybe you know how to improve education — tell us how. The second thing is the taxation system. The federal tax system is decided in Congress in accepted political ways, and at the local level taxes are decided in various ways. Third, the decision concerning how much housing there should be of various kinds is determined in a legislature, which in our great wisdom is an imperfect political place. What do you want to change? You have identified three cases in which you would like to improve the mechanisms of our society. What shall we do?

DAVIDOFF: The issue is very simple. My speech is political. I said the issue is normative. I believe that we need greater equity in the society and that we haven't achieved it. We have lost in the political market place, and now we must develop our power and make coalitions so that we can alter the political results. You gave us what you said was an objective appraisal, an objective projection of what would happen. This was based upon the norms of our present society. Your projection was guided by what is currently accepted. It didn't have to be that way. You could have proposed alternative ranges that could occur in our society if we pursued different policies.

We have choices to make concerning how we act and what we choose to study. I come here today on a political errand. There is great social injustice. We planners are here to invent the future because we don't like it the way it is. It is necessary for people like ourselves to make explicit the issues that underlie social changes of the future. I wish that everybody were on my

side on the issue. Since that is not the case, I think the people involved in discussing the future should see that the issue of distribution — of who gets what — should be made explicit and not constantly swept under the carpet.