



Comparative Planning Cultures

Edited by **Bishwapriya Sanyal**

Comparative Planning Cultures

CHAPTER I

HYBRID PLANNING CULTURES: THE SEARCH FOR THE GLOBAL CULTURAL COMMONS

BISHWAPRIYA SANYAL

INTRODUCTION

Are there significant variations in the ways planners in different nations have influenced urban, regional, and national development? Do such variations arise from differences in planning cultures, meaning the collective ethos and dominant attitude of professional planners in different nations toward the appropriate roles of the state, market forces, and civil society in urban, regional, and national development? How are such professional cultures formed? Are they indigenous and immutable, or do they evolve with social, political, and economic changes both within and outside the national territory? Particularly relevant for our times is the intensification of global interconnection in trade, capital flows, labor migration, and technological connectivity and its effect on national planning cultures. Are there signs that previously dominant planning cultures are being challenged as a result of such interconnection? And, if so, are such challenges leading to the formation of new, radically different planning cultures?

The contributors to this volume address these and related questions, drawing on planning experience in ten nations and at different territorial levels, ranging from the local to national level. The nations vary by degrees of urbanization and industrialization. The United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Japan, and Australia are relatively more industrialized and urbanized than China, India, Indonesia, Iran, and Mexico, which are industrializing

countries. The nations also vary in terms of their established political systems. On one end are the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Netherlands, with long political traditions of democracy; on the other end is China, ruled by a communist party, albeit with an administrative structure that has been decentralized recently. In between are India, democratic and with a federal structure of government; Australia, founded in the early part of the twentieth century, also with a federated governance structure; Mexico, democratic since the revolution in 1910 but led by one centralized political party until only recently; Iran, struggling with a unique blend of theocracy and democracy in a relatively centralized governance structure; and Indonesia, which until recently was ruled by an autocratic leader supported by the army. This complex political scenario makes the discussion of planning cultures difficult but also intriguing.

As a general background to the discussion of specific planning cultures in each nation, this volume contains two theoretical papers, from John Friedmann and from Manuel Castells, that attempt to capture broad global trends at the end of the twentieth century. Castells highlights the impact of technological changes—particularly in information and communication—and how such changes have radically altered the material basis for urbanism. Castells is arguing, implicitly, that contemporary planning practice in all nations must acknowledge and meet the challenges posed by the new technological dynamics influencing urbanism. Friedmann differentiates this global scenario into three different parts, highlighting the sharply varying quality of urban lives in industrialized nations, industrializing nations, and “transitional” nations attempting to transform their previously socialist economies to fully industrialized, market-driven economies anchored in private ownership of the productive forces. This differentiation suggests that global interconnections—of trade, investment, flows of labor, cultural symbols, and other ideas, which are grouped together all too often under the term *globalization*—are not leading toward a homogenization of planning cultures across the globe. The sharp differences in the levels of industrialization among the three groups of nations and the particularly different ways each group is linked to the global economy seem to be the crucial variables influencing different planning practices in the three sets of nations.

PLANNING CULTURE: THE GOLDEN YEARS

Why focus on the planning culture of a city, region, or nation if, indeed, its political economy is what ultimately shapes the particular characteristics of its planning endeavors? In this chapter we probe this question through a brief

historical analysis of how and why the notion of planning cultures emerged from the discussion of planning practices in industrialized as well as industrializing countries. Such an analysis logically begins with the years immediately after World War II, when planning flourished in both industrialized and industrializing countries, so much so that Peter Hall described them as “the golden years of planning.”¹ There was no discussion of planning cultures, however, during this period. What made it “golden” was the optimism among planners—urban, regional, as well as national—that planning efforts did not have to be based on the intuitive and aesthetic sensibilities of architects and urban designers of the past. In contrast, planning culture could be scientific and rational, based on accurate observations of statistically valid samples of reality, followed by dispassionate and value-neutral analysis of socioeconomic trends. Such analyses would lead to professionally crafted recommendations formulated through rigorous and objective assessment methodologies, such as cost-benefit analysis, planning-programming and budgeting systems, that had proven useful in conducting World War II.

The rational comprehensive model (RCM) of planning, about which much has already been written, reflected the aspirations of the postwar period.² It was backed intellectually by theories of location of firms, initially developed in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century and later introduced in the United States and elsewhere.³ Earlier location theories took on a new intellectual power and persuasiveness when combined with analytical studies of transportation—in particular, the automobile and its impact on location of not only firms but also households. The result was a rapid growth in land use and transportation modeling that reinforced the role of planners as professionals with the necessary knowledge and expertise to shape the future in a scientific way.⁴

In industrializing countries emerging from colonial rule, the dominant planning culture was equally optimistic and technocratic and more centralized than in industrialized countries. Many industrializing countries drew their inspiration from the planning experience of the former Soviet Union.⁵ Economists and statisticians dominated the planning process, which was conceived as a scientific and rational process requiring expert and technical knowledge. The topic of national culture was rarely, if ever, discussed. This was because, in part, the goal of planning was to change the national culture so as to rapidly modernize, both economically and politically. Though issues of national sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and economic self-sufficiency⁶ were discussed regularly by political leaders in many newly decolonized

nations, planners, on the whole, rarely incorporated particular cultural attributes in formulating plans. The only visible difference in planning cultures after World War II was between ex-British colonies and ex-French colonies—particularly in Africa. The French model of colonial governance had been more centralized than the British style of administration, and some differences lingered on even after the colonies were independent. Both types of ex-colonies, however, pursued the same technocratic and export-driven approach to planning, with one clearly defined objective—to estimate the need for bilateral and multinational aid to support the annual growth rate of their national economies.⁷

At the city level, planners pursued the Western style of comprehensive planning by creating new master plans that embodied the vision of modern cities with distinctly separated land uses connected by transportation arteries. Much has been already written about this effort.⁸ One issue relevant for our purpose is that the actual culture of planning as practiced on a day-to-day basis was not as the planning documents described it.⁹ Most city planning offices were poorly staffed, with limited resources. Usually there was not even the rudimentary infrastructure necessary for serious technocratic planning, which required large amounts of data, technological capabilities, and a cadre of well-qualified and well-paid staff. Nevertheless, the inspiration for modernization was so strong that some national governments invested large sums from export earnings and international aid to create new capital cities. Planning for many of these capital cities was led by foreign architects with little knowledge of local planning culture.¹⁰ This lack of knowledge was not considered a drawback; on the contrary, since the goal was to interject a culture of modernization both in the physical form of the city and in its planning process, the lack of local knowledge was considered an asset, particularly because external experts who were to help modernize these cities were expected to be autonomous of traditional loyalties and local corruption.¹¹

PARADIGM SHIFT IN PLANNING CULTURES

The golden years of planning lasted for almost two decades, if one acknowledges 1968 as the turning point when prevailing notions of planning came under attack in both industrialized and industrializing countries. Though this transition is well documented,¹² it is worth reminding ourselves that what came under attack were not only the results of planning but also the culture of planning practice. The criticism came from many quarters, including planners themselves—particularly those based in academia.¹³ Attributes of planning that

had been viewed as strengths during the golden years were now seen as major drawbacks. Planning was now considered too technocratic, elitist, centralized, bureaucratic, pseudoscientific, hegemonic, and so on.¹⁴ In industrializing countries the criticism of planning went even further. The critics argued that, rather than serving as a positive force for social change and modernization, planning had been the major hindrance to such change.¹⁵ Drawing on criticisms of planning from both the right and left of the ideological spectrum, an eclectic argument was made that top-down, state-centered planning was inflexible, unresponsive to the needs of the people, and alien to local culture.¹⁶

There was much discussion in both industrialized and industrializing countries about the need for a paradigm shift in planning practice. According to the new paradigm, planning practice was to be “bottom-up” and “people-centered,” relying no longer on economists, engineers, and statisticians, but on anthropologists, sociologists, scholars of cultural studies, and grassroots activists, who were closer to the people.¹⁷ Institutionally, the focus was to shift from state agencies to nongovernmental organizations and private voluntary organizations, which were considered more efficient, equitable, flexible, and accountable.¹⁸ In this new mode planning was to become more participatory, culturally sensitive, politically more explicit in advocating the needs of disadvantaged groups, and, overall, less technocratic and less reliant on modern technology, such as computers, for problem solving.¹⁹ This paradigm shift in what was considered effective planning was more pronounced among academic planners than among practitioners, who could not change their style of practice as quickly as the academic discourse was changing. Nevertheless, with time, planning practice did change, producing a mixed outcome.²⁰

On the positive side, planners became more concerned about environmental issues, sexism, and the impact of racism on urban form and planning practice. The civil rights movement had coincided with the paradigm shift in planning practice and raised the general awareness of planners regarding the multicultural composition of urban populations.²¹ In general, the planning process became more open to public participation. In newly industrializing countries, the shift in planning practice was most noticeable in discussions of development. Until then, development had been equated with economic growth only. The new paradigm of planning from below stressed issues of income redistribution, poverty alleviation, and the critical roles of housing and the urban informal economy in meeting the basic needs of the urban poor.²² This led to the recognition that the planning problems of industrializing countries were starkly different from those of industrialized countries. Hence,

the old paradigm of modernization built on the experience of industrialized countries was not appropriate for the newly industrializing countries. Planning in industrializing countries required sensitivity to their cultural, economic, political, and institutional particularities.²³

On the negative side, the shift in the dominant planning paradigm also created some problems. As traditional planning institutions came under attack, they lost not only legitimacy but also resources, weakening their power to intervene decisively in the socioeconomic and political processes influencing the urban built environment.²⁴ Though some alternative planning institutions did emerge in the process, they were not empowered to pursue a comprehensive approach to urban problems.²⁵ These new planning institutions focused on one or two problems of specific constituencies and were usually too small to address large-scale problems. Also, contrary to popular perception, they were not necessarily more efficient or accountable than traditional planning institutions.²⁶ True, the new paradigm opened up the planning process to public scrutiny. However, in some countries, this occurred to such an extent that the process of decision making became contentious. This forced planners to become negotiators, learning these skills on the job, through trial and error. In the process, planner-mediators often withheld their professional views to keep from "biasing" the deliberative process and, instead, searched for the common ground among contesting views, sometimes arriving at solutions that embraced the lowest common denominator.²⁷ This kind of planning process did not strengthen the claim that professional planners had valuable knowledge and training that others lacked.²⁸ Disagreements among planners themselves only deepened the ambivalence about what professional planners could contribute to decision making, which was reflected in growing disagreement among the planning theorists.²⁹ Lacking a professional consensus about how to plan well, professional planners reacted to planning problems with little certainty about their own effectiveness. This professional anxiety, combined with the threat of declining resources, led some to declare that the profession was in a state of crisis.³⁰

PLANNING UNDER ATTACK

The 1980s interjected two new elements into the culture of planning practice. First, as globalization of industrial production became increasingly widespread, manufacturing industries were moving out of old industrial cities. The outflow of capital left behind cities with high unemployment, housing foreclosures,

and an underutilized infrastructure that could not be maintained on sharply declining revenues. Urban planners in the United States and other industrialized nations realized that the economic health of these deindustrialized cities could not be restored by traditional city planning.³¹ Planners were at a loss for effective solutions, and some called for a national urban policy to tackle the effects of deindustrialization.³²

Second, the ascendancy of neoliberal politics, led by President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher, radically changed the professional planning discourse.³³ For planners, what is important to remember about this major political turning point is how that historical moment tarnished the image of conventional planning by discrediting the role of government in general, and regulatory practices in particular, in influencing social outcomes. Politely marketed as “reinvention of government” or “new public management,” neoliberal attacks on the state and planning were aimed at unraveling the social contracts among governments, market agents, and citizens that had been established earlier by the “welfare state” in industrialized countries. In industrializing countries, the attacks comprised three interconnected policy approaches, commonly known as stabilization, liberalization, and privatization.³⁴ The purpose of these policies was to counteract the lagging economies of industrializing countries, which were blamed on government intervention. Though the criticisms of state policies and planning practices in industrializing and industrialized nations varied, their objectives were similar—namely, to make all nations compete in the global economy by lowering the costs of production and accumulation. This required lean, flexible, and market-friendly states that were entrepreneurial as opposed to regulatory. The goal was to attract private investment by lowering the risk of such investments and decreasing taxes on profits. Thus, private–public partnerships became a key planning strategy for planners; and this strategy was pursued by bypassing traditional planning institutions, which had become an arena for contentious politics. New planning institutions emerged in the form of development corporations, rather than planning agencies, because what inspired the moment was entrepreneurship and development, not regulations and planning.³⁵

Ironically, at a time when planning was under attack and losing its traditional power, there was a “communicative turn” among the planning theorists in industrializing countries.³⁶ At a time when the powers that be did not want to engage in serious planning, the planners were proposing that the legitimacy of planning could be restored via public deliberations organized

by small-scale community groups and other nontraditional and grassroots organizations. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 provided the last nail needed to seal the casket on the old planning paradigm. As mentioned earlier, the Soviet Union had inspired many industrializing countries to formulate national plans for rapid industrialization. For nearly seventy years, the Soviet Union, along with China, Cuba, and other communist countries, had also provided concrete examples of alternative institutional arrangements. These alternatives lost their initial appeal as the effects of authoritarianism came to be known, however, decreasing the resistance to a totally hegemonic discourse of the kind exemplified by Francis Fukuyama's (1989) declaration of "the end of history" with the collapse of the Soviet Union.³⁷

POST-COLD WAR PLANNING

Fifteen years after Fukuyama's triumphant declaration, the world does not seem either more peaceful or more prosperous. The troika of neoliberalism—stabilization, liberalization, and privatization—along with the dismantling of traditional planning institutions did not generate a high rate of economic growth, except in China, which pursued a policy path of its own. The sluggishness of the economies of industrializing countries, even after many rounds of stabilization, liberalization, and privatization, is now being blamed on corruption.³⁸ To justify the failure of neoliberalism, some have reinvented the argument that certain cultural practices are the real barriers to economic growth.³⁹ In the industrialized countries, the rapid expansion of information and communication technologies did not really materialize into sustained economic growth. Moreover, the integrative power of the new technology has not brought the people of the world closer. Income inequalities within and among the nations of the world have increased since the Reagan-Thatcher effort to dismantle the welfare state in industrialized countries and the developmental state in industrializing countries.⁴⁰ The concurrent rise of religious fundamentalism in both types of countries has added a new anxiety about secular planning practices. Yet some of the benefits of social change achieved in the 1970s—such as environmental awareness, appreciation of racial and gender diversity, and recognition of global interconnectedness—continue to influence "planning conversations" in most countries.⁴¹ This strange mix of social trends at the beginning of a new millennium in human history calls for serious reflection about the enterprise of planning and its validity, if any, under the new circumstances.

There are many ways to reflect on planning. One could study the effects of efforts to reinvent government and the concept of new public management, or one could focus on how neoliberal attacks on traditional planning institutions have altered planning styles.⁴² One could highlight planning success stories, such as participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, or examples of successful infrastructure planning for the European Economic Union.⁴³ Conversely, one could focus on planning disasters and explore the reasons for such outcomes. Ironically, the number of case studies of “best planning practices” has increased significantly since the 1980s, when planning came under attack.⁴⁴ When read carefully, most such case studies demonstrate not so much the effectiveness of astute planning practice, but how either the market or, more commonly, the civil society contributed to the success of these projects. In other words, documentation of “best practices” did not strengthen the arguments for planning. On the contrary, it demonstrated that to achieve good results, traditional planning approaches relying on regulations must change to fit the demands of the market.⁴⁵

The contributors to this volume are aware of the changing nature of planning practice, from its golden years immediately after World War II to its gradual loss of legitimacy over the last fifty years, as a unique professional service rooted in specialized knowledge and technical expertise for solving problems of spatial entities. The nature of change in planning practice has not been identical in all nations, however. Variations between industrialized, industrializing, and transitional nations certainly exist; even within each type of nation, one finds large variations in the ways traditional planning practices have changed, evolved, or declined over the last fifty years.⁴⁶ Traditional explanations for these variations point toward differences in political economies. But such explanations have come under scrutiny with the growing acknowledgment that the global interconnectedness of trade, finance, and managerial practices is inducing institutional isomorphism and beginning to erode distinctions among different territorial jurisdictions.⁴⁷

The rapid expansion of information and communication technologies since the mid-1990s has strengthened the perception of a convergence in institutional forms and practices, even though, in reality, one can observe significant differences in the ways planners have coped with change. Country-specific evaluations of efforts to influence neoliberal policies clearly indicate that the way neoliberal rhetoric was translated into actual policies varied widely among nations.⁴⁸ Neither was the welfare state dismantled uniformly across all industrialized countries, nor was the developmental state disbanded

in the same way in every industrializing country.⁴⁹ This large variation in out-comes raises the question whether neoclassical economists who predicted unifying and homogenizing effects of neoliberal policies overlooked the particularities of varying planning cultures.

FOCUS ON PLANNING CULTURES

The issues of culture in general and planning culture in particular have never been of interest to neoclassical economists, who dominate the current discourse on economic growth. During the golden years of planning, however, development economists and Keynesian economists dominated the discourse. But starting in the early 1970s, their theories came under attack, and the argument that some economies required specialized attention and state intervention began to wither away.⁵⁰ As planning came under attack for distorting the market, neoclassical economists argued that cultural differences among the peoples of the world were not relevant. They proposed that all individuals are “rational actors” continuously engaged in furthering their self-interest. According to their view, planners and policymakers should acknowledge this fundamental truth and create institutions that would facilitate, not hinder, the universal urge among people to maximize their self-interests.⁵¹

The purpose of this volume is to assess the validity of such universal proclamations about planning in light of concrete experiences in ten particular nations, which differ in their size, level of industrialization, resources, and political structures. Drawing on “thick descriptions” of planning practices, we have attempted to identify whether each case setting is characterized by unique institutional arrangements that have shaped its planning culture. We also probe the extent to which such cultural traits reflect what Paul Ricoeur once described as the “cultural nucleus” of a territory.⁵² This is an important question because cultural identity is often viewed as comprising core cultural traits that are indigenous, inherited, and immutable. Much of the criticism of planning practice that emerged in the 1970s under the banner of multiculturalism argued that traditional planning had failed, in part, because it did not acknowledge this fundamental element in the way people formulate their own identities.⁵³

Yet, as described earlier, planning culture in general seems to have changed over the last fifty years. In seeking to explain this change, we have focused, in particular, on whether and how the ongoing intensification of global interconnectedness in trade, capital flows, and technological connectivity

is affecting planning culture. Are there signs of a convergence of planning cultures since the golden years of the 1950s, when technical rationality, expert knowledge, comprehensiveness, and bureaucratic structures of administration were celebrated? How and why did this style change in different settings? Is a common planning style continuing to emerge as all nations compete for the benefits of globalization? Or is the planning style in each setting being shaped by its unique cultural practices?

The last question brings to the fore an old issue that planning theorists have grappled with since the early 1960s, when urban riots erupted, first in U.S. cities and later in Europe and elsewhere—namely, how politics influences planning style, and vice versa. The case studies in this volume confirm the changing nature of planning styles and cultures and raise the question whether planning culture should be regarded as a relatively autonomous and independent variable. And these case studies suggest that planning culture, much like the larger social culture in which it is embedded, changes and evolves with political-economic changes, sometimes becoming more democratic and participatory but at other times changing in the opposite direction. To be sure, planning culture is affected not only by political changes but also by other changes, such as technological innovations, demographic shifts, and the emergence of new problems or sudden deterioration of any one or more existing problems. International flow of planning ideas also affects planning styles, although not to the extent claimed by either its critics or its proponents.

How does one develop new insights about such a complex social process with multiple and interconnected causes and effects? The essays in this volume vary in the style with which they address the issue of planning cultures. The authors selected different time periods, problems, and intellectual approaches based on their experience and expertise. Such variations in methodology provide unique stories, which I have attempted to tie together under a set of broad themes.

VARIATIONS IN PLANNING CONTEXTS

The issue of contextual specificity seems obvious as one reads the descriptions of different planning practices in different nations: Indonesia is very different from India, which is very different from England, which, in turn, is different from France, and so on. Booth's comparative historical analysis of planning systems in Britain and France (Chapter 11: *The Nature of Difference: Traditions of Law and Government and Their Effects on Planning in Britain and*

France) demonstrates that even though both planning systems were inspired by German town planning in the nineteenth century, they evolved in very different ways, owing to differences in their legal systems (common law in Britain, in contrast to reliance on statutes in France), in state traditions (a relatively centralized state in France, which has a written constitution, in contrast to a relatively decentralized state in England, which does not), and in the ways private property rights are defined.

In other examples of institutional specifics, Sorensen (Chapter 10: *The Developmental State and the Extreme Narrowness of the Public Realm: The Twentieth Century Evolution of Japanese Planning Culture*) demonstrates the ways in which Japanese planning is shaped by a distinct state–society relationship characterized by a persistent notion of individual and collective sacrifice for the sake of national interests. Sorensen argues that although this uneven relationship between state and civil society was cultivated prior to World War II, it persisted during the postwar period of democratic governance. The distinctly centralized style of Japanese planning draws on this culture of sacrifice; and in this top-down approach, the Japanese planning bureaucracy is supported by both political parties and business elites, forming a mutually supportive triangular relationship.

All of the case studies in this volume reveal unique planning contexts. Faludi (Chapter 12: *The Netherlands: A Culture with a Soft Spot for Planning*), for example, describes how planning in the Netherlands is shaped by a set of circumstances created not only by its geography but also by its Protestant tradition, corporatist structure of decision making, and “a culture with a soft spot for planning.” In sharp contrast to the Netherlands, planning in Australia, described by Sandercock (Chapter 13: *Picking the Paradoxes: A Historical Anatomy of Australian Planning Cultures*), is neither comprehensive nor anchored at the national level. This difference is explained by the unique history of Australia’s emergence as a nation-state that consciously avoided reproducing both Britain’s class antagonism and America’s market-driven model.

CHANGING NATURE OF PLANNING CULTURES

It is widely known that planning contexts vary not only among different nations in the world, but also within nations, particularly those with federal governance structures. What is interesting, however, is to question the extent to which such contextual specifics can be attributed to indigenous cultural

traits of planning. The studies in this volume demonstrate that the concept of *cultural essentialism*, in which culture is portrayed as static, homegrown, pure, and immutable, is inaccurate.⁵⁴ Rather, these planning cultures seem to have evolved with social, political, and economic influences, both internal and external, creating hybrid cultures whose complexity can only be understood through deep historical analyses.

Booth's study (Chapter 11), for example, documents well the German origin of French and British planning. Cowherd (Chapter 8: *Does Planning Culture Matter? Dutch and American Models in Indonesian Urban Transformations*) describes the influences of Dutch and American planning in Indonesia. Similarly, Davis (Chapter 9: *Contending Planning Cultures and the Urban Built Environment in Mexico City*) discusses the dual influence of French and American planning and design styles in Mexico City. Tajbakhsh (Chapter 4: *Planning Culture in Iran: Centralization, Decentralization, and Local Governance in the Twentieth Century*) mentions European (Belgian and French) influence on constitution writing in the early part of this century. Banerjee (Chapter 7: *Understanding Planning Cultures: The Kolkata Paradox*) illustrates the influence of Ford Foundation advisors familiar with American planning traditions in the planning culture of Kolkata, India. Similarly, Leaf (Chapter 5: *Modernity Confronts Tradition: The Professional Planner and Local Corporatism in the Rebuilding of China's Cities*) describes the impact of economic liberalization—a neoliberal initiative originally formulated in Washington, D.C., which, in conjunction with political pressure from inside, deeply affected planning practice in China. True, Leaf argues that all such changes were ultimately co-opted by China's established political hierarchy. But, as Ng (Chapter 6: *Planning Cultures in Two Chinese Transitional Cities: Hong Kong and Shenzhen*) describes, a new style of entrepreneurial planning did emerge in Shenzhen as a result of opening the Chinese economy. In other words, planning styles may evolve and change even without a radical change in the political system.

The most dramatic example of external influence on what Robert Fishman has called internal "planning conversations" is portrayed in Birch's case study (Chapter 14: *U.S. Planning Culture under Pressure: Major Elements Endure and Flourish in the Face of Crises*) of planning in lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. This case adds a new dimension to the growing conversation among planners regarding globalization—not only of capital and labor, but also of terror. Whether this unusual event will forever alter American planning culture is not clear

from Birch's description of the many actors and institutions involved in the planning. But the way these numerous actors generated many planning responses, which at the end were also deeply influenced by a few wealthy individuals, is particularly North American. The reader may already be aware of the competition held to generate design options to rebuild on the site of the World Trade Center. To what extent do these design entries from private firms around the world reflect American planning culture? This question can only be answered by considering the contemporary cosmopolitan quality of New York City, whose planning culture has evolved over the last 125 years with waves of migration as well as investment from abroad. New York City is now rightly acknowledged as a world city.⁵⁵ Hence, it was appropriate to seek worldwide for design solutions for its destroyed landmarks. There is much support for this sentiment among New Yorkers, who recently applauded Santiago Calatrava's spectacular design for a new train terminal next to the site of the former World Trade Center. Although trained in Spain, Calatrava was able to capture the ethos of New York City, in part because New York is a global city with many cultural influences assimilated, over the years, in its built form.

GLOBALIZATION AND PLANNING CULTURE

Much has been written about the homogenizing impact of increasing global connectivity on culture.⁵⁶ The case studies presented here suggest, however, that both the promise and the threat of cultural homogenization through globalization may be exaggerated. Though these case studies provide many examples of global interactions, none of them demonstrate that such interactions are leading to a convergence in planning styles. True, decentralization of governance and planning is a trend described by Tajbakhsh (Chapter 4) in Iran as well as by Leaf (Chapter 5) in China. Similarly, what Sandercock (Chapter 13) describes as entrepreneurial planning (in contrast to regulatory planning), currently in vogue in Australia, also exists in many American cities as well as cities in other nations with very different planning histories. Nevertheless, those trends appear to have been adapted to local conditions, generating varied outcomes. For example, though local corruption seems to have increased with the reduced regulatory power of the local state in Indonesia (Chapter 8) and though Leaf (Chapter 5) notes a growing influence of Communist Party officials who might have benefited from new opportunities

for corruption in China, similar outcomes were not reported for the other nations analyzed in this volume.

Although such variations in outcomes should be considered before we either criticize or praise the impact of globalization on planning culture, our studies indicate that the nations studied by the contributors are all making efforts to reap the benefits of globalization and that planning as a governmental activity is deeply engaged in such efforts. Planners are not resisting the growing interconnectedness of financial and information flows; instead, they are modifying planning practice to suit the needs of the moment.⁵⁷ Of course, planning is being transformed in different ways in different countries, but the intentions of planners worldwide are quite similar: to avoid parochial isolation and exclusion from the global movement of finance, trade, and technological advancement. Whether this trend is solely a result of the spread of communication and information technology, we do not know. But, as Castells argues in Chapter 3 (*Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age*), this new technology has definitely influenced the perceptions of planners around the world, who worry that if they are not part of what Castells calls “the Net,” they will be left behind as the world moves forward.⁵⁸ Yet, as Tajbakhsh (Chapter 4), Cowherd (Chapter 8), Faludi (Chapter 12), and Leaf (Chapter 5) document, this trend has not homogenized planning cultures. Nations have been able to retain local planning characteristics that draw on their particular religious and political traditions.

Has globalization eroded the capacity of nation-states to plan and intervene to achieve particular social outcomes? Much has been written to suggest that nation-states have lost the ability to influence business cycles that had been part of the Keynesian approach since the 1930s Depression.⁵⁹ Some have argued that the taxing power of states, both national and local, has been decreased by the growing movement of capital across territories and the consequent increase in competition to attract external investment by lowering tax rates.⁶⁰ This, in turn, has reduced planning’s resource base, making territorial entities more vulnerable to conditions set by global investment flows. In this volume, Castells’ description (Chapter 3) of the growth of information technology and its adverse impact on the traditional planning capabilities of nation-states resonates with these predictions, although he is not as pessimistic as many others about the future of planning. As initially proposed by Peirce, Johnson, and Hall in 1993,⁶¹ Castells suggests that an inadvertent but positive side effect of the decline of national capacity for planning may be the rise in

the planning role of local states, particularly in large cities with diverse economic bases.

None of the authors writing for this volume attempt to verify the prevailing assertions about globalization's impact on planning capacity. Their discussions present some evidence, however, that the actual impact may be more complex and mixed than has been claimed by either the critics or proponents of globalization. For example, Sandercock (Chapter 13) describes how competition for global investment has influenced Australian planners to ignore some social justice issues and, instead, encourage the entrepreneurship of cities eager to offer joint investment ventures and reduced taxes to international corporations. Similarly, Cowherd (Chapter 8) provides some examples of how Indonesian planning has suffered from the de-emphasis on its regulatory functions, to provide opportunities for corporations as well as local politicians to profit from deregulation. In contrast, Ng's description of China's success (Chapter 6) suggests that cities and provinces are not totally at the mercy of private investors. In fact, Ng's comparison suggests that Hong Kong, once an entrepreneurial city-state, is now lagging behind Shenzhen, a municipality, mainly because of innovation and entrepreneurship by a new cadre of local young planners. Leaf's description of Chinese planning (Chapter 5) is not as optimistic. He is skeptical of the relative autonomy of local planners vis-à-vis the old political power elites. Nevertheless, the steady growth of the Chinese economy since around 1990 is an indicator of how local-level planning officials and locally based entrepreneurs can create the conditions for economic growth. Through administrative decentralization and other institutional mechanisms that have not yet been well analyzed, Chinese planners have managed to open the economy to external and internal corporate investors, thereby generating an unprecedented rate of economic growth, which has also increased the revenue base for planning. Part of the reason for China's success is that even though private investment can now roam the world at the press of a computer key, ultimately such investments need to settle in specific localities to generate further growth. As Krugman observed in 1995, localities with good physical and social infrastructures can be more attractive for private investment than cities that offer large tax concessions and cheap land but lack such infrastructures.⁶² Local planners in China are aware of this comparative advantage. With relatively fewer dictates from central planners compared with the pre-reform period, these planners, along with local businesses, have ushered in a new entrepreneurial planning style that no one predicted in the mid-1990s.

The relationship between cities and prospective private investors, both internal and external, is also examined in Birch's analysis (Chapter 14) of New York City's effort to rebuild on the site of the World Trade Center. Although Birch describes a rather chaotic planning process, with many groups and institutions interacting simultaneously, her description does not suggest that private investors alone dominated the planning process. Planning, even if institutionally fractured in the classical North American way, still matters.

Banerjee's historical analysis (Chapter 7) of planning in Kolkata, the West Bengal state capital, just prior to a long Marxist rule provides yet another twist to the conventional understanding of the relationship between private investment and public planning culture. Banerjee describes vividly how the Ford Foundation devoted significant professional expertise and resources to broaden the scope and style of planning for the Kolkata metropolitan area. The chief minister of the state at that time was worried about rising unemployment in the region, which was being exploited by the Marxist opposition parties. One key objective of the Ford Foundation planning was to generate more employment by making the Kolkata metropolitan region more conducive to private investment. The strategy was not to reduce the state's capacity for planning in order to generate more employment. On the contrary, it expanded the city's planning capabilities by injecting elements of social and economic planning into the then-dominant physical planning efforts. The Ford Foundation's efforts did not immediately increase employment, and Ford eventually reduced its involvement as a Marxist-led coalition government came to power both in the state of West Bengal and in the city of Kolkata. Nevertheless, the dominant planning culture had been changed for the better because it was no longer confined to drawing traditional master plans. During a brief period after the collapse of the Marxist-led coalition government, the previous ruling political party returned to power and tried to resurrect the planning efforts initiated by the Ford Foundation. That effort led to the creation of a new planning institution, the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority, which remains active even after twenty-five years of continuous Marxist rule at the state level. The socioeconomic planning that the Ford Foundation had first brought to Kolkata to deter a Marxist takeover of the state is now being used by a Marxist government for the same purpose as was initially intended: to make Kolkata attractive for private investment through strategic public expenditures on physical and social infrastructure.

CULTURE MEETS POLITICS

The Kolkata planning story is only one example among many in this volume that suggest that to understand the planning culture of any place, one needs to understand the relationship between planning and the socioeconomic and political changes in that area. Leaf's exploration of Chinese planning culture (Chapter 5), Tajbakhsh's analysis of planning in Iran (Chapter 4), Cowherd's description of planning in Indonesia (Chapter 8), and Davis's portrayal of planning in Mexico City (Chapter 9) all provide the same lesson. Planning culture is not an independent variable, even though the word *culture* is often used to signify a domain separate from economy and politics. As was argued earlier, planning cultures, when subjected to historical analysis, reveal themselves to be in constant flux, sometimes resisting, while at other times facilitating social change in response to both internal and external pressures.

The impact of social, economic, and political changes on the planning culture of any one place is not predictable. As our case studies exemplify, in some countries, at certain historical moments, the impacts of such changes have been progressive. But there have been regressive outcomes as well, even within the same country. For example, as Sandercock (Chapter 13) describes, Australian planners' attitude towards native Australians has evolved significantly over the last 100 years. Also, they now have more awareness of gender inequalities and are more concerned about environmental degradation. Yet around the same time as environmental concerns first emerged in Australia, city planning began to move away from its traditional concerns with equity and social issues, toward "place marketing" to attract private investment. Cowherd (Chapter 8) describes similar mixed outcomes in Indonesia, where President Suharto's resignation led to administrative decentralization and increased the freedom of the press and participation by grassroots groups. At the same time, however, the planners implemented "American-style market liberalization," thereby decreasing regulatory controls and increasing stratification of the populace by race and class. Davis (Chapter 9) also describes mixed outcomes in Mexico City. On the one hand, the Mexican revolution terminated the dominance of the old oligarchy and ushered in a new era marked by new concern for the welfare of the poor. On the other hand, planning for Mexico City, in the aftermath of the revolution, was stifled by political and professional differences among competing groups of planners. Even in Japan, where the dominant ideology calls for sacrifice by the people in the interest of nation building, Sorensen (Chapter 10) mentions vigorous

opposition by civil society to the single-minded focus on industrial expansion, particularly after the collapse of Japan's bubble economy in the early 1990s.

One could point to more examples of varying outcomes within the same country. Leaf (Chapter 5), for example, describes radical changes in China during the Cultural Revolution, when Mao Zedong condemned professionalism as a form of elitism. Now there is a complete reversal. A new group of technocratic planners has emerged to manage the transition from socialist to entrepreneurial cities. In contrast, Hong Kong, as Ng (Chapter 6) notes, has lost its earlier entrepreneurial edge and is unable to restructure its planning culture to compete successfully with some emerging municipalities in Mainland China.

These examples highlight one issue particularly relevant for this volume—namely, to understand variations in social outcomes in any place, one needs to look beyond cultural attributes to political configurations and economic relations that constitute the specific political economy of that place. As Friedmann (Chapter 2) notes, the specific characteristics of planning institutions in each nation are shaped largely by their unique political-economic relationships. Using extensive historical analysis, Booth (Chapter 11) demonstrates that property relations, intergovernmental relations, and the legal framework of each nation are three areas with particular relevance for planning endeavors. Understanding the constitutional logic underlying these three elements and how they have evolved over time in each territorial jurisdiction can generate significant insights about the nature of planning cultures. Castells (Chapter 3) adds a fourth element specific to our times—namely, the role of information and communication technologies, which have created new economic as well as political linkages among territorial jurisdictions. Castells argues that such linkages have implications for planning from the top as well as from the bottom.

As the political and economic elites of nation-states are increasingly interconnected, there is a parallel connection among groups at the bottom who seek identity and recognition as they struggle to understand who is really affecting their quality of life. These movements from below, which Friedmann had described earlier as forms of radical planning,⁶³ did not receive adequate attention in our symposium. Although the authors in this volume do not ignore pressures from below and voices of dissent, such dissent is not the central focus of inquiry in any of the eleven case studies. One plausible reason for this unintended bias is that although planning is usually portrayed as a professional activity that engages all people, in practice it is still dominated by

professional planners at the top, even though the nature of such domination has changed over the last 300 years. The cases presented here mostly describe the dominant planning practices in each country. Nevertheless, as all the case studies demonstrate, neither dominant planning practices nor the cultures underlying those practices are etched in stone. Both change, sometimes in a progressive direction, at other times regressively in response to political struggles. Understanding the origin and outcomes of such political struggles is essential if we are to go beyond the static conception of planning culture that only fuels social conservatism.

CONCLUSION

The eleven case studies of planning presented at the symposium (and in this volume) did not generate a precise formulation of how planning cultures affect planning practices. What emerges from them is a more complex understanding that planning culture should not be read as specifically demarcated and unchanging social attributes that clearly differentiate the planning practices of different countries. Instead, the focus of inquiry should be the continuous process of social, political, and technological change, which affects the way planners in different settings conceptualize problems and structure institutional responses to them. If planning culture is viewed in this dynamic way, in contrast to traditional notions of culture that are used to evoke a sense of immutability and inheritance, then we can go beyond "cultural essentialism," which, in essence, is exclusionary, parochial, and an inaccurate representation of history.

As the case studies in this volume document well, there is no cultural nucleus or core planning culture, no social gene that can be decoded to reveal the cultural DNA of planning practice. Planning culture, like the larger social culture in which it is embedded, is in constant flux. That is why it is so difficult to precisely demarcate the cultural elements in any process of social transformation. Cultural anthropologists now acknowledge this amorphous and changing nature of culture. As Shweder recently noted, "Cultural elements are too hard to define, too easily copied and too long detached from their points of original creation. Contact between cultures and processes such as borrowing, appropriation, migration, and diffusion have been ubiquitous for so long that little remains of the authentically indigenous."⁶⁴ Shweder's comment is valid for planning culture, which is deeply engaged in what Edward Said called "a complex traffic of ideas."⁶⁵ This is not to say that planning practice in

all nations is the same. The case studies here clearly demonstrate that each setting is distinct, but this distinct quality is the result of a complex process of social change, not the inevitable and predictable outcome of a static planning culture. Rather than searching for the cultural nucleus of planning practice in each nation, we need to understand how changes occur in planning practice in all nations, including our own. Lacking such a comparative and dynamic understanding of social change, which is a central objective of planning, we may inadvertently legitimize both the stereotypes we hold of others and those they hold of us.

To understand the impact of contemporary social change on planning culture, we must acknowledge the trend toward global connectivity through increasing movement of investment, trade, ideas, and people. Both the promise and the fear of this trend have been exaggerated, however. Our case studies demonstrate that even though global connectivity and the simultaneous ascendancy of neoliberal ideas have penetrated the planning discourse in all nations, their impacts have varied widely. Planning institutions have not been dismantled equally, nor have regulations been withdrawn to the same extent, in all nations. Similarly, the move away from comprehensive planning based on large data sets and technical analysis is not evident equally in all nations. On the contrary, the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies—in particular, the spread of geographic information systems—has resurrected the legitimacy of “scientific planning” at the local level.

To be sure, the dominant planning narrative in any setting is not free of opposition from below. The intensification of social and economic inequality with increased global connectivity has generated opposition to dominant planning narratives, in varying degrees, in many nations. These oppositional narratives are not articulated with equally strong voices in all nations, and they have not been integrated in a systematic way to create a global civil society. One plausible reason for this outcome is that planners worldwide are aware that external influences need to be tempered to fit local conditions. It is the changing politics of different settings—not of planning cultures—that have conditioned planners’ responses to external forces. Nevertheless, planning as a professional activity has not lost legitimacy worldwide. On the contrary, the demand for planners’ expertise is growing in many nations, although currently such expertise is sought after less to regulate and more to facilitate private investment, with minimal opposition from below.

This composite picture of planning practice, based on eleven case studies, merely suggests how planners in different nations are coping with multiple

forces of social and spatial change. These examples do not lend themselves to rigorous comparisons among nations. There was never an intention on our part in launching this study to compare planning cultures by some well-calibrated criteria. In the past, efforts to make such comparisons have contributed not to better understanding but to cultural arrogance and parochialism. Our objective was to transcend such divisive outcomes by starting a global conversation about planning practice, using planning culture as a conceptual vocabulary for this open-ended discussion. This approach to the topic of culture—in particular, cultural differences among nations—is very different from the approach of those who fear an impending clash of civilizations. Our objective was not to confirm the stereotypes of planning cultures and thereby accentuate the differences among the peoples of the world, but to search for a common intellectual ground—a sort of “social commons”—that would provide a new context and meaning for planners at a time of significant social changes and increasing global connectivity.

Planners are not the only group searching for new meaning in their vocation at a time of rapid and uncertain changes. There are signs of such efforts in other domains of social action as well. The resurgence of religious identity emphasized by fundamentalist and orthodox groups is another indicator of how people distressed by the forces of social change are attempting to cultivate social meaning. Perhaps at the other extreme is the mobilization of social groups under the banner of multiculturalism. Unlike religious fundamentalists, the multiculturalists do not evaluate “others.” Like the fundamentalists, however, they are not interested in seeking a common ground among different groups. In contrast, our effort to understand planning cultures in different nations was motivated by the intellectual need to seek such a common ground. This should not be misunderstood as an effort to create a universal culture for planners or a version of “Davos culture” for conversation among the planning elites of different nations.⁶⁶ Our goal, which became increasingly clear to me as I edited this volume, was to use intellectual encounters of people with very different planning experiences to create a global conversation about the role of planning in social change. The hope is that this kind of intellectual encounter will eventually lead to a more refined understanding of ourselves as well as others.

In the not-too-distant past, different cultures often encountered one another through armed confrontations and wars. We are still engaged in such encounters, and some are still trying to legitimize them by constructing theories based on cultural conflicts. Yet another way that different cultures

continue to encounter one another is through the exchange of goods and services in the ever-expanding market, now aided by new communication technologies. Our effort at understanding the planning cultures of ten nations was intended to encourage a different form of cultural encounter. We hope that, in the process, we have begun to mark the contours of the intellectual and social commons that form a common ground for the different peoples of the world. We may not have reached that destination as yet, but at least we have begun the journey.