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Critical about Criticality

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I have been thinking of writing this paper since 1982, when I was a student at the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning (GSAUP) at UCLA, and attended a meeting of doctoral students and faculty with the then dean Harvey S. Perloff. The governance structure of GSAUP, created under the leadership of John Friedmann, required regular meetings of this kind.[1] These informal seminars, led by the faculty, provided unique opportunities for the doctoral students to learn about a wide range of issues related to planning programs, from curriculum to governance. Perloff did not always attend these meetings, perhaps because of multiple demands on his time; but I remember his presence on one occasion, when he led the discussion by asking what advice the students and faculty would give to planners in a city facing economic hard times because of an exodus of manufacturing industries.

There was no immediate response to Harvey's pragmatic question. After an uncomfortable silence, a senior faculty member asked Perloff whether he was concerned about the part of the city that was wealthy, or the part that was poor? Perloff replied that we could consider whichever parts of the city we cared to, but what would be our advice to the planners? A longer silence followed Perloff's question this time; it was ultimately broken by a somewhat halting response from a young lecturer who suggested that the planners might be able to learn from the experiences of other cities with a similar economic base that had been relatively successful in restructuring their economies. Perloff showed his appreciation for this response with his hallmark polite smile, but the exchange triggered in my mind a question I have grappled with many times since then—namely: why the long silence and hesitation to answer such a straightforward question posed to faculty and students in what then was considered a leading critical planning program in the nation?

In this special issue of *Critical Planning*, celebrating fifteen years of publication, I want to finally address this nagging question with the aim to explore the limits of a particular type of criticality that had deeply influenced planning education at GSAUP during the 1970s. That criticality, as I describe later in the paper, was the product of a specific historical moment in North American planning education, and it had a major impact in cultivating a particular strand of planning scholarship whose benefits continue to enrich planning

academia and practices. Yet the conceptual limits of this particular type of criticality were already visible by the early 1980s when Perloff posed his question to test if criticality of the kind cultivated then at GSAUP could pragmatically address the urban problems resulting from the "deindustrialization" of America.[2] My purpose in probing the limits of that particular criticality now is not to diminish its significant contribution to planning education, but to energize a new conversation on criticality. In other words, my goal is to learn from GSAUP's experience of the 1970s, not to tarnish its early normative longings. The ultimate goal is to sharpen the conceptual underpinnings of criticality so contemporary planning education can help cultivate a new critical sensibility which would empower planners to act, not tie their hands with multiple knots of "dilemmas," "dialectics," and "divided allegiances."

I am aware that the social construction of a new form of criticality in planning education is not waiting to be started with this paper. Since I graduated from GSAUP in 1984, the planning program has evolved in multiple ways with new faculty, new program initiatives, and a new institutional arrangement; the Urban Planning Department separated from Architecture in 1994 to join the School of Public Policy and Social Research, recently renamed the School of Public Affairs. While I did not witness such changes firsthand, and my knowledge of them is limited, I know the program continues to retain its reputation as an outstanding critical planning program vis-à-vis mainstream planning schools. What type of criticality is being cultivated now, and how such criticality differs from what I learned as a student, I cannot answer as confidently as I can recount the intellectual flavor of the 1970s at GSAUP. It is my hope that this paper,

by offering a snapshot of the very beginning of the program, will encourage a dialogue about the past, in order to think about the future of critical planning education. I find it instructive to reflect on how "the ideas in good currency" evolved at UCLA, what kind of conceptual obstacles hindered their evolution, what facilitated them, what if anything remains of the old normative longings and conceptual framework, and the major turning points in the overall conceptual trajectory that is by now almost 40 years old. It will be instructive to learn whether the lessons I draw from "early GSAUP" resonate in any way with those who have experienced, firsthand, the "late GSAUP," and the ways in which notions of "criticality" have shifted since then.

In this paper, I begin by describing three key elements of the critical mode of thinking which characterized GSAUP's conceptual approach during the 1970s when its reputation as a critical planning program was being established. Then, I discuss why that particular form of criticality could not address the kind of question Perloff posed to the faculty and students. In the third section of the paper I describe my personal intellectual journey from the days of "early GSAUP" to now. It is plausible that similar lessons, or other even more insightful ones, have already been incorporated by UCLA's planning program over the last twenty-five years. An anonymous reviewer of this paper drew my attention to a range of new initiatives that have reformed the planning program since I graduated. I am proud that the program has evolved over the years, still retaining its reputation as a critical planning school. What is intriguing for me—and why I wrote this article—is to better understand how to cultivate a critical mindset now that can indeed "translate knowledge into action," as

John Friedmann asked of planners. I do not think we know the answer to this central challenge in critical planning education and I hope that this article will add to a continuing discussion of that question by reflecting on a period of recent history that I was fortunate to be part of.[3]

In writing this paper I have drawn largely on my experience as a doctoral student at GSAUP from 1976 to 1978, and again from 1981 to 1984 after returning from a three-year assignment with the World Bank in South Central Africa. At GSAUP, I worked closely with Harvey Perloff as a Research Assistant on a collection of his important essays, which would become his last book.[4] This research assignment provided me with ample opportunities to ask Perloff questions related to planning education, because he had written on that topic as early as 1957![5] In addition to Perloff, I was fortunate to work closely with John Friedmann, Peter Marris, and Leland Burns who, along with Ed Soja, Martin Wachs, Dolores Hayden, Allen Heskin, David Conn, Donald Shoup, and others, constituted GSAUP's core faculty at that time.[6] My impressions of GSAUP are somewhat biased by my close association with the field of international development and regional planning, and the faculty associated with it. International development was one of the prominent areas at GSAUP then, and the team of faculty who led the area strongly influenced the overall intellectual tone of the planning program.[7] My close interaction with these faculty members as well as my familiarity with their published work provides some of the material for the writing of this paper. I have deep affection and gratitude for the education I received at GSAUP, and what I learned as a doctoral student continues to provide me intellectual nourishment even after twenty-five years. This paper is a labor of love and admiration for the idea of critical planning which this journal has nurtured for the last fifteen years—an accomplishment I celebrate by writing this paper.

PART I: The Conceptual Roots of Early GSAUP's Criticality

By the time Dean Harvey Perloff appointed John Friedmann to be the chair of the newly established Graduate Program in Urban Planning at UCLA in 1969, mainstream-planning ideas were already being challenged. The first serious criticism of planning, as it was conceived after World War II, was launched by Herbert Gans in 1962, when he argued that the architectural roots of planning needed to be replaced by an understanding of behavioral sciences, particularly that of urban sociology.[8] By 1965 Alan Altshuler had demonstrated that the so-called rational-comprehensive plans were neither rational nor comprehensive, contrary to how they had been portrayed. Politically powerful groups deeply influenced city plans to suit their specific interests, which deviated from the general public interest of urban residents.[9] The widespread resistance to urban renewal plans had also shaken the profession of planning. Jane Jacobs' landmark book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), had already gone through two printings by the time UCLA's planning program was formally launched.[10] By 1969, criticism of mainstream planning was the norm, not the exception, as the civil rights movement, women's movement, and environmental movement swept across the nation. The damages inflicted by the urban riots in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles

were still visible in 1969, and a sense of professional crisis in planning was widely acknowledged. Even mainstream planning educators, including Harvey Perloff, agreed that there was a need for a new type of planning education relevant for the moment.[11]

John Friedmann was an excellent choice to head the new planning program. Perloff was familiar with Friedmann's passion for planning from the time Friedmann was his student at the University of Chicago (1949-1955); Perloff also appreciated the international planning experience Friedmann accumulated since his graduation.[12] Perloff had advised President Kennedy in formulating a plan for Central and South America in the aftermath of the Cuban revolution; and Friedmann had worked as a planner in Chile and Venezuela, and was generally knowledgeable about Mexico and other Latin American nations. Friedmann's doctoral dissertation on the Tennessee Valley Authority also overlapped with Perloff's interest in regional planning. Academically, Friedmann, a graduate from the University of Chicago, had excellent credentials, having taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as an Assistant Professor before traveling to South America. By 1969, Friedmann's writings already reflected his frustration with traditional technocratic planning paradigms. His yearning for an unorthodox and more politically inspired education that would meet domestic and international planning challenges was evident by the beginning of 1970s.[13]

With regard to intellectual inspiration, Friedmann's guiding lights were Karl Mannheim and Hannah Arendt.[14] Mannheim's influence is visible in the broad way Friedmann conceptualized planning as a form of societal guidance, not limited to traditional

master planning. Arendt influenced Friedmann's normative approach to planning, inspiring him to be critical of modernism and instrumental reason of the kind which had led to the rise of Nazism, Fascism, and ultimately World War II, which had ended with the use of the nuclear bomb. By the early 1970s, when Friedmann was assembling a team of faculty to create a critical planning school, the critique of modernization took a distinct turn.[15] The early enthusiasm for rapid economic, political, and social developments of newly decolonized nations had not only subsided by the 1970s, but seemed exhausted by the real economic and political difficulties these nations faced.[16] Cities in developing nations were experiencing increasing unemployment and housing shortages. Urban poverty was increasing with time, discrediting dominant development and planning paradigms that had predicted a gradual decrease in poverty with increases in levels of income and consumption by the end of the first decade of development.[17] The need for new normative thinking, which valued equity over economic growth, seemed essential at that moment. The view that such a redirection would require a new type of societal guidance, unlike old technocratic planning, was widely shared among development scholars.[18]

The faculty Friedmann assembled at GSAUP contributed in their own way to this larger intellectual project of "alternative development" and planning, drawing on both North American and international experiences. The idea of modernization was focus of criticism, and also the first key element of criticality taught at early GSAUP. Friedmann directed his critique at industrialization and the pursuit of economic growth.[19] Ed Soja, a geographer with research experience in East Africa, critiqued the conventional theories of geography of modernization and explained the

patterns of urban growth as resulting from a globally integrated capitalist accumulation process.[20] Peter Marris criticized social modernization for ignoring the social and psychological costs of change and introduced a strand of social thought from Durkheim to the interdisciplinary mode of critical thinking at GSAUP.[21] Dolores Hayden critiqued the anti-women practices of post-World War II American suburbia.[22] Leland Burns critiqued modernization of housing delivery in developing nations for not meeting the needs of the urban poor.[23] Collectively, these criticisms tarnished the belief that modernization was the only paradigm of development, and cultivated in the students a deep dislike for traditional notions of progress, as advocated by Walter Rostow,[24] which required industrialization, urbanization, increased global trade, and consumption.

At the heart of these criticisms was a view of the world as composed of a small core of few industrialized nations and a vast periphery of poor nations who aspired to industrialize but could never do so under the prevailing patterns of international trade and the flow of capital. The neo-Marxist critique of the global capitalist system provided much of the intellectual ammunition behind these criticisms, and made core-periphery issues a starting point for all discussions.[25] This form of conceptualization emphasized inequalities of all kinds, among nations, classes, and regions, and cultivated a deep awareness among the students that economic, political, and social inequalities were interconnected, and that such inequalities were being exacerbated by increasing global interconnectedness which manifested itself differently in the core and peripheral city regions.[26] This core-periphery analogy provided the conceptual backdrop to the critique of a range of issues in both

North America and developing nations. For example, international trade was criticized for facilitating "unequal exchange." Conspicuous consumption in core regions was criticized for surplus extraction from the periphery. Global movement of capital was criticized for deindustrialization at the core. The rise of the urban informal economy was blamed on "uneven capitalism." Underlying such criticisms were critiques of modernization, capitalism, and developmentalism, as well as a fundamental critique of the notion of progress that had inspired planning practice for the last one hundred years.

The second element of GSAUP's approach to criticality, reflected in a sequence of three courses under the title of Planning Theory, was directed at traditional planning practices. It was as pointed and well formulated as the critique of modernization theories. Friedmann led the charge against traditional planning practices, among which were included rational-comprehensive models, various methodologies of "instrumental reason" such as cost-benefit analysis, and old planning institutions such as city planning bureaucracies and national planning boards.[27] The fallacies of top-down planning were exposed with examples from both the United States and developing nations. In particular, incrementalism as a method of risk-aversive planning was dismissed as being inadequate for the United States (which had experienced major urban problems in the 1960s) and inappropriate for developing nations, which required more than tinkering at the edge to get out of the shackles of under-development.

I remember taking a course on planning theory from Barclay Hudson in my first semester at GSAUP when Friedmann was on sabbatical leave. This course,

required for all students in both the master's and doctoral programs, provided an overview of multiple planning theories which Hudson had arranged in a sequence to match the word SITAR: S for synoptic or rational planning, I for incremental planning, T for transactive planning, A for advocacy planning, and R for radical planning.[28] Hudson discussed radical planning at much length, drawing on the work of Mao Tse-tung, written during the Cultural Revolution as a critique of established bureaucratic practices.[29] This was followed by a few sessions with Professor Alan Heskin, who had co-authored the first paper in planning theory with the words "Radical Planning" in the title.[30] Heskin was eclectic and engaging, as was Hudson, but the real guru of planning theory was John Friedmann.

Friedmann had just published *Retracking America: A Theory of Transactive Planning* (1973) and used it as a text for a doctoral seminar on planning theory. It is noteworthy that he begins *Retracking America* by describing a boat journey with his students in northeastern Brazil, and draws on his planning experiences in Brazil, Venezuela, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and other places around the world. Friedmann made it clear that his message about the dysfunctionality of old planning styles applied to both developed and developing nations, and that a new form of innovative planning was necessary to get out of the crisis the old paradigm had caused. The replacement Friedmann offered was transactive planning, a new term he had coined and included in the subtitle of his book *Retracking America*.

A central element of planning theory as taught in early GSAUP was a staunch critique of bureaucratic planning led by state actors. In both developed and developing nations, governments were considered a part of the problem, not a part of the solution. The criticism of governments—or to use a more theoretical term, "the state"—came in many forms: governments pursue modernization at the expense of everything else; governments and national elites work together to maintain a system of unequal exchange between the core and the periphery, within nations and among nations; government bureaucracies are inefficient, inflexible, unaccountable, and do not care about equitable outcomes; governments are not representative of the people, and that is why many prefer to join social movements than work through established political parties who run governments; government planning is top-down and relies on statistical information which inaccurately aggregates the varying needs of the poor; government programs are generally costly and ineffective; and finally, governments do not represent the public interest.

These criticisms borrowed their conceptual rationale and empirical evidence from both the left and the right of the ideological spectrum. The neo-classical economists provided the conceptual foundation for the notion of the "rent seeking state"; the neo-Marxists attacked the legitimacy of the state as a neutral actor and underscored the close class linkages between state actors and owners of large private firms. Together, these criticisms reinforced the need for alternative institutions, located closer to the people, that are not engaged in regulations but in facilitation, and are not driven by a central urge to either enforce social control or engage in profit making. As a result, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) were considered preferable to government agencies as institutions appropriate for initiating development

from below.[31] The NGOs and CBOs were assumed to have characteristics opposite of the state: they were more efficient, equitable, accountable, and flexible than governments; and their planning style was the opposite of the rational-comprehensive method. NGOs and CBOs participate in face-to-face dialogic relationships, learn from the people rather than direct them, and ultimately empower the people instead of treating them either as welfare recipients or as consumers.

The third element of criticality in early GSAUP was the aversion to traditional architects and urban designers. Even though institutionally the planning program was located within the same school as the architecture program, and the first faculty appointment in the planning department was that of a physical planner,[32] there was very little respect for what physical planning of the kind exemplified by old master plans could contribute to alternative thinking. True, within the planning program there was a sub-specialization in urban design and built form, but it was one of the weakest areas within the planning program—though Dolores Hayden, and later Jackie Leavitt, provided inspiration for many students. In line with the dominant intellectual mood of the program, Hayden's research also was critical of traditional urban design from a feminist perspective, and her conceptual approach drew more from behavioral sciences than from architectural theories.[33] Overall, as with their view of the state, critical thinkers regarded physical planning by architects and urban designers as part of the problem, not part of the solution. First, it was apolitical, unlike radical planning which placed politics at the center of all efforts. Second, urban design lacked serious analysis of the kind which rigorous social sciences were built upon.

And third, urban designers never realized the illogic of reverse causality—as Peter Marris once pointed out, just because social and economic forces influence the built form that does not mean that such forces can be influenced by rearranging the built form.[34] It is my hunch that Perloff shared some of the same sentiments because he was trained as an economist, but he was also aware of planning's traditional ties to architecture, and generally favored keeping architecture and urban planning together in one school even though there was very little intellectual interaction between the two departments.

The faculty members in the Department of Urban Planning were more frank in their criticism of physical planning. Master planning was totally dismissed as wishful thinking and pretty coloring of maps by planners detached from the social turmoil brewing in the cities. Physical planning in general was shunned for lacking a critical voice and for emphasizing visual aesthetics over social equality. Cities came to be portrayed as parasitic and providing the physical setting for global capitalism to anchor itself. Rural development and "agropolitan development" became the buzzwords. For a time, the term "urban" in urban planning came under attack, and there was a discussion about whether it should be removed from the name of the program, leaving only the word "planning" in the title. Some even went further, and recommended that the word "planning" itself signified a type of analytic approach and power hierarchy that did not reflect well the world-view of the program's faculty. One suggestion was to name the program "The Program on Social Change"—because social change was the ultimate goal of the faculty and students at early GSAUP. Though not taken up seriously, this suggestion did create some

conversation among the students about what their degree would be titled: Master's in Urban Planning, or Master's in Social Change? Ultimately, the proposal to rename the program was dropped, but what never changed—and, in fact, steadily deteriorated—was the relationship between the departments of Architecture and Urban Planning. Underlying the strained relationship were different assumptions about what was to be considered useful knowledge. To the urban planning faculty who dismissed master plans, deplored urban renewal, and were very critical of suburbs, useful knowledge meant socio-economic and political awareness of capitalism as a system which could not be changed through design but, instead, required social movements from below, not only in the United States but worldwide.

PART II: Criticality and the Education of Planners

It is true that the education of progressive planners requires that they develop a critical sensibility regarding the status quo, particularly if current social conditions are not conducive for the full development of human capabilities of disadvantaged groups.[35] In that sense, GSAUP served an important role in planning education, sensitizing its students to issues of inequality and social injustice in an increasingly interconnected world. It is also true that every aspect of professional planning cannot be taught in only two years in a university environment. Graduates sharpen their professional judgment through practice, a form of learning by doing, for which planning programs can prepare them only to a certain extent. Nevertheless, it is important to deliberate why the kind of

critical thinking cultivated at early GSAUP might have inadvertently held back the students and faculty from responding boldly to the type of question Perloff raised in 1982.

The critique of modernization and developmentalism cultivated in early GSAUP did raise awareness regarding inequalities, but this awareness was rooted in a particular structural model of economic relationships between "the core" and "the periphery," which did not leave much room for any positive or surprising outcomes. Consequently, short of delinking from the system, the model did not encourage any public policies as appropriate for peripheral regions, which were assumed to be linked to the core through an exploitative relationship of unequal exchange. In that sense, the model was deterministic. Even though it explained the historical development of the unequal relationship over time, which included periods of colonialism, it never cared to explain whether and why some lagging regions or nations were relatively successful in restructuring such relationships to their own benefits. I do not recall any discussion about such successes. Examples such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, or Japan were dismissed as exceptional either because they were city-states or because they were totally dependent on North American investments. As a result, the students developed a sense that the structural relationships of inequality needed to be snapped rather than altered. There was some discussion of "selective closures" by peripheral regions and nations, and an emphasis on inward-looking policies, which channeled resources towards the fulfillment of basic needs of the people.[36]

This emphasis on the basic needs of the people was portrayed as a contrast to the goal of rapid

industrialization and economic modernization. To be sure, by the 1970s there was much to be critical about the process as well as the outcomes of industrialization through induced rural–urban migration, but such criticisms were used to tarnish the very notion of modernization. As a result, industrialization was viewed as the wrong objective to pursue.[37] This precluded any discussions about why some regions or nations were able to industrialize and, at the same time, meet the basic needs of the people. In other words, meeting the basic needs of the people and modernization through industrialization were portrayed as an either/or proposition, leaving no room for inquiry into variations in the outcome of modernization strategies.

One reason such variations in public policies were not scrutinized is because government in general was seen as part of the problem. This bias against government and "the state apparatus," as it was sometimes referred to, deflected the focus invariably towards either CBOs or NGOs as institutions appropriate for meeting the basic needs of the people. When questions were raised about how these relatively weak institutions with limited organizational infrastructure and financial resources could adequately respond to the enormous challenges of underdevelopment, the discussions would end, usually with comments about the emerging role of new grassroots-based social movements which were different from the kind of class-based struggles Karl Marx had anticipated. We learnt that territorially based social movements which emerged out of socio-spatial dialectical processes had not been anticipated by Marx, and that understanding such processes was necessary for initiating social change.

The three courses on planning theory required of all doctoral students reinforced the anti-government bias, foreclosing any option that public policies of the old kind and style could be utilized in any way to facilitate progressive social change. Among the traditional planning practices, the two planning styles that were held in most contempt were rational comprehensive planning and incremental planning. The former was rejected because of the notion of rationality it professed, and also for its political naivety; the latter was rejected as an apology for tinkering at the margin when the situation called for major transformation. Both styles were associated with government, which, as I mentioned earlier, was viewed as an institution that could not be relied upon to facilitate social transformation until it was transformed itself. The hopeful part of planning theory, as it was taught then, was Friedmann's work on transactive planning and dialogic relationships between planners and citizens in search of innovative solutions to social problems. The open-endedness of this approach, which drew its inspiration from ongoing research on social learning, provided some room for creative thinking on how to address social problems.[38] Later, this strand of thinking led to a new consensus among planning theorists, that "collaborative planning" and open-ended negotiations among various stakeholders is a real alternative to both rational-comprehensive planning and incrementalism.[39] GSAUP under the leadership of John Friedmann played a key role in initiating this new trend and generally making planning theory a legitimate and interesting area of research, despite initial criticisms from some well established planning schools, MIT included, that there are no general theories of planning to be taught.[40]

In crafting early GSAUP's approach to planning theory, Friedmann and others drew from a range of interesting sources, starting with Plato's *Republic*, and then covering books by Martin Buber, Peter Kropotkin and the Frankfurt School as well as Mao Tse-tung.[41] One common thread that ran through this varied set of writings was a distrust of bureaucracy and the state. All anarchist writings are, of course, against the state. The Frankfurt School's criticism was also directed at state-sponsored capitalism; and during the Cultural Revolution, Mao's writing was clearly against old established bureaucratic practices, which he wanted to change to make "the great leap forward." Collectively, such writing foreclosed any discussion regarding how the state could be used for initiating progressive social changes. One reason for this bias against government was a widespread disillusionment with formal political processes—i.e. elections in democratic societies—that provided political leadership for bureaucratic institutions. Two factors had contributed to this disillusionment. In the United States, the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War had deeply hurt government's legitimacy. In the developing world, by the mid 1970s, many nations were being ruled by armies along with authoritarian governments.[42] The historical context, however, only partially accounted for the anti-government bias within GSAUP at that time. In general, critical thinking that drew its strength from the Frankfurt School and neo-Marxism did not generate much curiosity about good performance by government bureaucracies and, consequently, did not cultivate any appreciation for how the state structure was being used effectively in some nations, regions, and even cities, to not only reinvigorate economic growth, but also redistribute income.[43]

The deep dislike of physical planning in general and master planning in particular added yet another layer of discomfort in thinking about solutions to planning problems. Traditional physical planning was viewed as a totally useless tool, similar in its denial of social conflict to an ostrich digging its head in the sand to avoid an impending attack. It is true that the traditional physical planners did not have an adequate response to the structural crisis of capitalism, which by the mid 1970s had led to the "de-industrialization of the core." Cities and regions devastated by the exodus of capital and employment could not be reassured that they could regenerate growth through any form of physical planning, let alone master planning of the old kind.

The discrediting of master plans had raised the fundamental question whether any document could really reflect the general public interest—the raison d'etre for planning until then. Since critical thinking sensitized the students to differences among social groups stratified by income, race and other factors, little effort was made to think about policies that would serve "the general public interest." This is not to say that old master plans accurately represented the general public interest; but they did provide a forum for discussion of issues related to public interest, and more importantly, they pushed planners to think about solutions that had to evoke the notion of public interest. This discipline to think in terms of solutions, even if not fully developed and tested, is crucial for the legitimacy of professional planners. In that regard planners and architects, despite their many differences, still have something in common. Both are ultimately asked to provide solutions, not just criticism. Critical thinking, if it is to become central to planning education, must appreciate this need for

problem solving.[44] One cannot bypass this requirement by arguing that planners are only responsible for setting up processes out of which solutions would eventually emerge in time through deliberations, and that the tempo of such deliberations can be hurt by planners advocating particular solutions that they personally prefer. Planners are expected to assist with problem solving, and to do so they have to go one step beyond social criticism and commit themselves, in the form of maps or reports, to propose policies that would address issues of general public interest.

PART III: Criticality Now

I have so far argued that the way criticality was cultivated at early GSAUP—during the first ten years or so of its operation—was an expression of a particular historical moment and the result of a particular constellation of multidisciplinary scholars who were generally critical of the modernization paradigm of development.[45] They were equally critical of the role of conventional public planning, as they were skeptical of the general role of government in initiating progressive social change. In particular, they perceived conventional physical planning of the kind practiced by architect-planners as useless. This particular type of criticality did launch GSAUP as a leading interdisciplinary planning school of alternative and critical thinking during the 1970s, but it also inadvertently cultivated a mindset which hesitated when faced with the kind of pragmatic question Harvey Perloff had posed in 1982.

This is not to say that answering the type of questions Perloff had raised is the litmus test of a good

planning education. As Susan Fainstein and others have proposed, good planning education requires sensitizing the awareness of students to how cities function, how planning institutions work, and who gets what, why, and how.[46] How planners think about such issues ultimately informs how they respond to urban problems. The direction of thinking, however, could work the other way as well. If asked for professional advice on how to best address an urban problem, a planner needs to think about such a problem in a somewhat different way than if he or she were a social scientist interested only to understand the problem. I acknowledge that this dichotomy between solving a problem and understanding a problem can be questioned. For example, one can ask, what is a problem? Why is it called a problem? Who calls it a problem? Likewise, what does a solution to a planning problem look like? How long will it work? And so on. Asking such fundamental questions was part of the education at early GSAUP and still remains central to any critical education. Yet, a practicing planner has to ultimately go beyond such questions and respond to the rather pragmatic question which Perloff had raised: What is to be done?

Is Perloff's question still relevant after twenty-five years? The current faculty and students in UCLA's Department of Urban Planning, which is now institutionally as well as physically separate from the Department of Architecture, within the School of Public Affairs, are probably the most knowledgeable to answer that question. Anonymous reviewers of this paper reminded me that there is a vast difference between early and late GSAUP. The core-periphery model has been discarded and replaced by "new regionalism and community based regionalism." The attitudes towards government and NGOs have

changed as well, with relatively more focus on public policies, particularly at the city and county level, and with an emphasis on the "labor-community nexus." New initiatives, such as the Community Scholars Program, have cultivated deeper links with practitioners and activists in the southern California region. A new concentration on physical planning and urban design now offers the option for students to integrate physical planning with public policies. These are all significant achievements that have helped retain the reputation of UCLA's planning program as one of the leading programs in the nation. Whether such changes have created a new critical sensibility will be of immense interest to many. While I am very proud of the intellectual resilience of UCLA's planning program and its capacity to reform itself from within, I am not the best person to reflect on such changes.

What I can write about instead, and will do so very briefly in this last section of the paper, are the kinds of intellectual influences that helped me to transcend the three conceptual constraints I outlined in earlier sections. The education I received at early GSAUP was broad and multidisciplinary, as well as critical. This prepared me well to appreciate that all knowledge is socially constructed, and hence, nothing is etched in stone. This sensibility is conducive for learning, which is a life-long process. The formal education we receive in schools and universities should be assessed not for the content of the courses, which can become obsolete rather quickly, but for whether such courses cultivate an ability for continuous learning on the topic area. In that sense, the education offered by early GSAUP remains crucial for my current thinking about development planning even though in this paper I discuss the conceptual constraints I experienced as a doctoral student as I struggled to

construct a planner's world view about international development and regional planning.

The first book that helped me transcend the mental block about the structural dependency of "the periphery" on "the core" was Peter Evans' *Dependent Development* (1979).[47] As is well known by now, Evans was the first revisionist scholar in development theory to demonstrate that foreign direct investment and international trade did not always result in "under-development." Evans demonstrated this surprising outcome by focusing on the particular economic relationships between Brazil and developed nations, and documented how such relationships had led to capital accumulation, technology transfer, increase in wages and so on in Brazil. This discussion of a case of relative success opened up for me the deterministic conceptual framework of the core-periphery model, even though I still remember how some scholars continued to use the core-periphery model by referring to Brazil as a case of a "semi-periphery."[48]

The second book that opened up the stale discussion on the perils of industrialization and de-industrialization was by Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide* (1984),[49] which documented how the old Fordist model of industrial production was being revised by flexible and specialized production processes in northern Italy. This book altered the tone of the ongoing discussion from gloom and pessimism to one that provided planners with some hope that perhaps the course of industrialization could be revised to create employment and generate income. It is not fair to reduce the complexity of Piore and Sabel's argument to this simple conclusion, but for the purpose of this paper, this brief description should serve as

an example of the kind of research which does not paralyze the planner, but instead opens up multiple possibilities as deterministic conceptual frameworks give away to a new type of theory building which celebrates surprises.

The third body of work that rescued me from my pessimism about "the state" is exemplified by two books: one by Michael Lipsky, titled *Street Level Bureaucracy* (1983),[50] and the other an edited volume by Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, titled *Bringing the State Back In* (1985).[51] Lipsky's book demonstrated how much there was to learn by going beyond the mega theories about "the capitalist state" which had dominated planning discussions in the 1970s, and by focusing at the micro level where state actors interact with ordinary citizens using their discretionary power to deliver goods and services that citizens expect the state to provide. Such detailed micro-level studies helped unpack the fear of the state as a mechanism for social control, and, again, opened up the field of inquiry without a predetermined view that the state was always a part of the problem. The edited volume, *Bringing the State Back In*, has become a classic, and does not need an elaboration about how it challenged "state bashing" by both the right and the left in the ideological spectrum. Drawing on historical accounts of "the Capitalist state," in both developed and developing nations, the contributors to this volume initiated a new body of literature that documented good performance by states but was not naïve about the power of states. It demonstrated how state power has been and could be used for progressive changes. The research for the edited volume did not rely on deductive and holistic theories, but instead provided detailed and nuanced accounts of various state interventions in developed as well as developing nations

which at particular historical moments decisively influenced the development trajectories of nations and regions.

These multiple strands of revisionist thinking about the planning capacity and intention of capitalist states coalesced most creatively and convincingly when a senior colleague of mine at MIT, Judith Tendler, introduced me to the astonishing research insights of Albert Hirschman. It is not that I was totally unaware of Hirschman's work prior to graduation. His classic book with Kermit Gordon, *Development Projects Observed* (1967)[52] was included in the reading list for the doctoral exam on international development and regional planning; but Hirschman's approach to development was not considered critical enough for deep reading at the time—unlike, say, David Harvey's work in *Social Justice and the City* (1973).[53] In fact, Hirschman was referred to, if at all, in passing as one whose research was the opposite of what "criticality" meant in early GSAUP. His notions of "unbalanced growth" and "strategically un-integrated planning" were dismissed as ideological cheerleading for a paradigm that had failed both economically and politically. As I read Hirschman's *A Bias for Hope* (1971),[54] I encountered a different world of how to conceptualize development problems. This did not challenge the normative goals of development I had nurtured at GSAUP; it offered a new way of approaching old planning problems. It is not that Hirschman does not care about inequality, or that he is always a strong advocate for state intervention. Even now he remains very skeptical about large scale, comprehensive and integrated planning efforts by government agencies. What his research offered is a closer look at what was on the ground, an appreciation for what has worked somewhat better that the rest,

even though such cases may not be representative samples. Most importantly, for planners, he explains how institutional constraints and "structural barriers" could be overcome through gradual incremental changes, which are often dismissed as mere "Band-Aids" covering deep wounds inflicted by unjust economic and political systems. I could continue to expand on how reading Hirschman challenged my thinking, providing some light at the end of the conceptual tunnel I was locked into,[55] but that would deviate me from concluding this paper with a closing thought on the third element of criticality regarding at early GSAUP, the separation of physical planning from social criticism.

The separation of physical planning from planning based on behavioral sciences, was not unique to early GSAUP. As I mentioned earlier, Herbert Gans had launched a staunch critique of physical planning as far back as 1962, and since then, many planning schools have grappled with this conceptual battle in their own ways,[56] with Harvard University marking this separation in the most pronounced way by creating a separate Graduate School of Design and relocating policy and planning to the Kennedy School of Government. This decision benefited neither the designers, who now lack systematic social criticism of design, nor the policy planners at the Kennedy School, who are eclipsed by neo-classical economists who care little about normative ideals and progressive social change. This is not the case at UCLA: I was informed by an anonymous reviewer of this paper who pointed out that UCLA's planning program now offers a concentration in urban design. Having such a concentration is not a new trend. Many planning programs, including MIT, offer such a concentration or specialization. The intellectual challenge of how

to synthesize the two conceptual frameworks—one for urban design and the other for policy planning—remains, however, largely unanswered. The designers continue to rely heavily on visual expression, while policy analysts prefer writing reports; the designers do not draw on any well demarcated analytical framework, while the policy planners prefer approaches based on social science; and most importantly, urban designers focus on large scale projects, while policy planners seek better understanding of how the political economy of public policies affect cities, regions, nations, and, even, the global economy.

Despite such inherent differences between physical planners and policy analysts, there are signs that a convergence of interest on environmental issues may bring them together. The term "environmental sustainability" is now widely used by both groups; and professional conversations on "green buildings" and "deep ecology" indicate a common concern that has the potential to bridge the two groups. Even though no particular research comes to my mind as I search for a model of such an intellectual synergy, I think that the return of landscape architecture and planning with deep ecological concerns may eventually generate a new body of work that could combine normative visions of good city forms with a multidisciplinary understanding of social processes. This intellectual longing is apparent in the designs and manifesto of "New Urbanism."[57] Perhaps in the not so distant future, designer-planners who are now being educated at UCLA will revise the notion of new urbanism, taking into account the social criticisms of this idea, and thereby reinvigorate the historical conceptual link between architecture and planning.

Would such an intellectual breakthrough eventually relocate the planning program back to the beautiful Perloff Hall where it used to be from 1969 to 1994? That may not be an important or even a relevant question to the current students, but to me it is; because my memory of the planning program at UCLA is deeply linked to the beautiful physical setting of the Perloff Hall, particularly to its intimate courtyard where I sat many afternoons discussing with my friends the intricacies of critical theory. A particular afternoon in February of 1978 comes to my mind when after a long conversation on criticality as the setting sun cast deep shadows on the quadrangle in front of the Perloff Hall, I had shyly expressed my love to a fellow woman student who I have been married to for 26 years. How could I not love GSAUP for the way it shaped both my professional and personal lives!!

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Lead Photograph

UCLA Urban Planning students discuss projects in a charrette. This photo was taken in 1978 when the Urban Planning and Architecture Departments were jointly: the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning (GSAUP). Photo courtesy of UCLA Urban Planning.

Notes

[1] See John Friedmann, "A Quarter Century of Progressive Planning Education: A Retrospective Look at UCLA's Urban Planning Program." *Critical Planning: The Journal of the UCLA Urban Planning Program* 1(1): Spring 1994: 32-41. Friedmann attributes the open, participatory style of governance to Perloff's leadership (p. 33).

[2] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (Basic Books, 1982). This book had a major impact on the planning conversations at GSAUP. I met Harrison for the first time at GSAUP in 1982. Later, in 1984, he became a colleague when I joined the faculty at MIT.

[3] A number of articles and books have contributed to a discussion of how to cultivate a critical mindset in planning education. For example, see John Friedmann, "The Core Curriculum in Planning Revisited" *The Journal of Planning Education and Research* 15(2), 1996: 89-104; Susan Fainstein "Planning Theory and the City." *The Journal of Planning Education and Research* 25(2): 121-130.

[4] A collection of Perloff's articles was published posthumously by Leland S. Burns and John Friedmann, *The Art of Planning: Selected Essays of Harvey S. Perloff* (Springer, 1985).

[5] Harvey S. Perloff, *Education for Planning: City, State & Regional: [Essays]* (Published for Resources for the Future by Johns Hopkins Press, 1957).

[6] By 1984, the year I graduated from GSAUP, a number of new and young faculty members had joined GSAUP. This group included, among others, Margaret Fitzsimmons, Rebecca Morales, Michael Storper and Jacqueline Leavitt. These faculty members were part of a second wave of planning ideas that deeply influenced planning education offered at GSAUP, but mostly after I graduated.

[7] Apparently, the number of students enrolled in the specialization of international development declined significantly in later years. As Friedmann noted, "From the

beginning, the urban planning program has maintained a high international profile. By the mid-seventies, perhaps a third of our student body was oriented towards what was still called the third world... But by 1992, the steam had gone from development studies and the number of students interested in this phase of our work has declined to less than twenty. The number of overseas students in the program has also declined dramatically, and many of our faculty initially interested in this topic, have abandoned the field for greener academic pastures." (p. 35) John Friedmann, "A Quarter Century of Progressive Planning Education: A Retrospective Look at UCLA's Urban Planning Program" *Critical Planning: The Journal of the UCLA Urban Planning Program* 1(1): Spring 1994.

[8] Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1962).

[9] Alan Altshuler, *The City Planning Process: A Political Analysis* (Cornell University Press, 1965).

[10] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Random House, 2002).

[11] Lloyd Rodwin, who was a contemporary of Harvey Perloff, also wrote about the need for a new type of planning education in his book *Cities and City Planning*, (Springer, 1981).

[12] By 1969, Friedmann had worked in both East Asia (Korea) and Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela). For details, see Friedmann, J. "A Life in Planning." *Prospect of Cities* (University of Minnesota, 2002)

[13] For example, see John Friedmann, "Notes on Social Action" *The Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35(5): September 1969: 311-318; John Friedmann "Planning as Vocation" *Plan (Canada)* Part 1, 6.3 April 1966: 99-124

[14] See John Friedmann, "A Life in Planning." *Prospect of Cities* (University of Minnesota, 2002) p. 121

[15] Dudley Seers. "The Meaning of Development." *International Development Review* Vol XI, No.4, December 1969

[16] Albert Hirschman, "The Rise and Decline of Develop-

ment Economics." in *Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond* (Cambridge University Press, 1981)

[17] William Arthur Lewis, *The Theory of Economic Growth* (Unwin Hyman, 1955).

[18] Irma Adelman, "Development Economics--A Reassessment of Goals," *The American Economic Review* 65, no. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the Eighty-seventh Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association (May 1975): 302-309.

[19] John Friedmann "The Crisis of Transition: A Critique of Strategies of Crisis Management." *Development and Change* 10, no. 1 (January 1979): 125-76; John Friedmann "On the Contradiction between Town and Countryside" *Comparative Urban Studies* 6 (1978): 5-41

[20] When I was a graduate student at the GSAUP, Ed Soja was beginning to develop the notion of socio-spatial dialectic which he expanded eloquently in his book *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000). Ed sensitized the students to the critique of geography of modernization which mapped human interactions without any attempt to explain such patterns. Drawing on his experience in Kenya, he explained why rank-size distribution of cities, which used to be considered a goal of modernization, did not explain spatial and social disparities.

[21] Peter Marris had joined GSAUP in 1976, soon after publishing his outstanding book, *Loss and Change* (Pantheon Books, 1974). In this book, Peter argued that modernization theory does not appreciate the psychological costs of personal and social changes that disrupt meaning, thereby also affecting the action of individuals and societies experiencing change.

[22] Dolores Hayden joined GSAUP in 1979. Her book *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (MIT Press, 1981) was a landmark book in feminist critical thinking of built space.

[23] Leland S. Burns developed this critique jointly with Leo Grebler in *The Housing of Nations: Analysis and Policy in a Comparative Framework* (Wiley, 1977). Burns was generally

more accepting of capitalism as a modernizing social force, and that is reflected in the title of the book, which is built on Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. But Burns was critical of modern housing policies that relied on the construction of multi-storied public housing to meet the growing needs of the urban poor.

[24] Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge University Press, 1960).

[25] Theotonio Dos Santos, "The Structure of Dependence" *American Economic Review* Volume 60 No.5 1998: 235-246; Samir Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (Monthly Review Press, 1977).

[26] Giovanni Arrighi, "International Corporations, Labor Aristocracies, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa" in R. Rhodes (ed.), *Imperialism and Underdevelopment* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Manuel Castells "Advanced Capitalism, Collective Consumption and Urban Contradictions" in Leo Lindberg, et al. (eds.) *Stress and Contradiction in Modern Capitalism* (Heath, 1975): 175-198.

[27] John Friedmann, "The Epistemology of Social Learning: A Critique of Objective Learning" *Theory and Society* 6.1 (1975): 75-92.

[28] John Friedmann and Barclay Hudson, "Knowledge and Action: A Guide to Planning Theory," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 40 (1974).

[29] Mao Tse-Tung, Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (Bantam Books, 1967).

[30] Stephen Grabow and Allen Heskin, "Foundations for a Radical Concept of Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 39, no. 2 (March 1973).

[31] For an extended discussion of this issue, see Bish Sanyal "Cooperative Autonomy: The Dialectic of State-NGO Relationships in Developing Countries," *ILS* (Geneva, 1994).

[32] Peter Kamnitzer, an urban designer, was appointed in 1965 under Dean George Dudley who preceded Harvey Perloff.

[33] Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream* (WW Norton & Co Inc, 1986).

[34] Peter Marris and Martin Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform: Poverty and Community Action in the United States* (Routledge, 1967).

[35] Amartya Sen makes this point forcefully in *Development as Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

[36] The notion of "basic needs" was introduced in development discourse by Paul Streeten. At early GSAUP, the concept was introduced by John Friedmann. See John Friedmann, *Life Space and Economic Space: Third World Planning in Perspective* (Transaction Publishers, 1988).

[37] Friedmann, John, and Mike Douglass, "Agropolitan Development: Towards a New Strategy for Regional Planning in Asia." in Fu-Chen Lo and K. Salih (eds.) *Growth Pole Strategy and Regional Development Policy* (Oxford, 1978).

[38] See Edgar Streeter Dunn, *Economic and Social Development; a Process of Social Learning* (Baltimore: Published for Resources for the Future, by Johns Hopkins Press, 1971). Friedmann was also influenced by Amitai Etzioni whose book, *The Active Society: A Theory of Societal and Political Processes* (Free Press, 1968), was required reading for the doctoral examination in Planning Theory.

[39] Patsy Healey, *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[40] John Friedmann made this point during a presentation at MIT in 1994 referring to his argument with Lloyd Rodwin, who had questioned the validity of planning theory as a body of knowledge useful for planners. At the presentation, Friedmann did remind the audience that a course on planning theory is now required by most planning programs.

[41] We read Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (Macmillan, 1965); Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Ethics; Origin and Development* (B. Blom, 1968); Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination; a History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Little, Brown, 1973).

[42] Robert A. Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World; Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Science* (Princeton University Press, 1973).

[43] See Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[44] Friedmann reminded me that he supports the need for critical planners to act. He wrote persuasively about this in "A Life in Planning." *Prospect of Cities* (University of Minnesota, 2002): 148.

[45] In responding to the first draft of this paper, Friedmann drew my attention to the evolution of his research over the years, and highlighted that he was more interested in understanding city regions than in core-periphery relationships. Friedmann's research on world city regions (co-authored with Goetz Wolff) "World City Formation: An Agenda for Research and Action" in *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research*, 6(3) September 1982: 309-344, did open up a new avenue for research, but my reading of this paper still reminds me of the core-periphery approach because of its macro, global analysis of various "flows" which benefit the world city regions at the expense of peripheral regions.

[46] See Susan Fainstein, "Planning Theory and the City" *The Journal of Planning Education and Research* 25(2): 121-130; Scott Campbell and Susan Fainstein "The Structure and Debates of Planning Theory" in Susan Fainstein and Scott Campbell (eds.) *Readings in Planning Theory* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).

[47] Peter B. Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton University Press, 1979).

[48] Lauren Benton, "From Culturalism to Structuralism and Beyond" *Comparative Urban Research*, Vol. XI no. 1-2, 1985: 7-13.

[49] Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity* (Basic Books, 1984).

[50] Michael Lipsky, *Street Level Bureaucracy* (Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 1983).

[51] See note 43.

[52] Albert O. Hirschman and Kermit Gordon, *Development Projects Observed* (Brookings Institution Press, 1967).

[53] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

[54] Albert O. Hirschman, *A Bias for Hope: Essays on Development and Latin America* (Yale University Press, 1971).

[55] For an elaboration of my reading of Hirschman, see B. Sanyal "Social Construction of Hope" in Lloyd Rodwin and Donald Schon (eds.), *Rethinking the Development Experience: Essays Provoked by the Work of Albert O. Hirschman* (Brookings Institution Press, 1994): 131-146.

[56] For a description of how this intellectual battle was fought ferociously at University of California at Berkeley, see M. M. Weber and F. C. Collignon "Ideas that drove DRCP" *Berkeley Planning Journal* 12 (1998): 1-19.

[57] See A. Kreiger, "The Planner as Urban Designer: Reforming Planning Education in the New Millenium" in Lloyd Rodwin and Bish Sanyal, *The Profession of City Planning: Changes, Images, and Challenges, 1950-2000* (Center for Urban Policy Research, 2000).