

Planning History Seminar
March 1993

1968, A Turning Point in Town Planning

A Contribution from the Crow Collection Association (*)

Before the Sixties - Paternalistic Physical Planning

In "The Origin of Modern Town Planning" (**) Leonardo Benevolo writes about the utopians of the early nineteenth century (Owen, St Simon, Fourier and others) who thought, wrote and acted about planning new idealistic communities, starting from scratch. He claims that these earliest planners had their roots so firmly planted in ideology that information on the history of town planning during this period is to be sought in the history of socialism rather than in specialised technical studies.

The 1848 revolutions, however, were a turning point in town planning history. According to Benevolo :-

The working class movement reached its decisive turning point with the advent of Marx and Engels, and Marxist Socialism intent on explaining the 1848 Revolution and its failure in strictly political terms stressed the contradictions of the earlier movements but completely lost sight of the link between tendencies in politics and in town planning which if formulated in over simplified terms, had previously been firmly maintained."

He describes how, in the mid-eighteenth century :-

Town planning fell within the sphere of influence of the new conservative ideology evolving during those years of Bonapartism in France, of the reforming Tory groups in England and of Bismarkian imperialism in Germany...the political paternalism of the new right."

Thus a gulf opened up between the utopian town planners (people with humanising ideas) and the practical town planners (people with professional skills) which was widened by the piece meal planning practices based on technical and legalistic regulations drafted by specialist officials.

In Australia our town planning, for over a hundred years, until the late 1960s, strongly reflected the influence of the practical piece meal town planners which were so powerful in Victorian England. There were a few exceptions such as the Garden City movements in some of our capital cities, but all of these were planned in a paternalistic manner.

.....

* Some information about the Crow Collection is attached.

* "The Origin of Modern Town Planning" by Leonardo Benevolo was first published in 1963. An English edition was not available until 1967 when it was translated and published by Routledge and Kegan Paul.

.....

1968, A Turning Point in Town Planning contd. (page 2.)

After the Sixties - Public Participation and Community Control

In Australia from the mid 1960s a new force began to influence town planning. This was the grass roots community movement which raised social issue and thus challenged the traditional planning methods of confining planning to the physical sphere.

Ideas on public participation and community control resulted in urban action groups preparing alternative plans. The community movement broke away from its purely negative "campaigning against" character to begin to demand that social, economic and environmental planning be considered to be as equally important as physical planning.

The following ten points indicate how the documents in the Crow Collection can be used to research these changes.

1. Challenging ideas about town planning and human relationships were being popularised by Ivan Ilyich in South America, Jane Jacobs in USA, the British Skeffington Report, and by Hugh Stretton and Leonie Sandercock in Australia. (i.)
2. In the national arena, although the Liberal Party held power federally and in most states the days of the the "die-hard liberals (such as Menzies and Bolte) had ended and they were being replaced by "small l" liberals (such as Gorton and Hamer). For some there was renewed confidence in the ALP which began to enunciate programs on town planning issues. (ii)
3. Trade unions were beginning to take up issues on living standards. In Victoria a trade union initiated "Living Standards Convention" was held in 1967. In 1968 as a result of a trade union seminar the organisation "Action for Adequate Child Care" laid the base for the later establishment of Community Child Care. The NSW the Green Ban had a significant effect on town planning throughout the commonwealth. (iii)
4. New types of environment organisations were beginning to emerge and to initiate campaigns on town planning issues. For example, the nation wide Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and state co-ordinating networks such as the Conservation Council of Victoria. (vi)
5. Some of the urban action organisations developed capacities not only to criticise official planning proposals but to prepare alternative plans which could not be ignored by officialdom. A great variety of ad hoc coalitions were formed around specific urban issues. (v)

6. Long term, viable utopian communities were established, for example at Nimbin, and various other locations. There was also some short term utopian colonies for example the 1973 Sunbury student settlement which was part of the Royal Australian Institute of Architect's Convention. (vi)
7. Accepted methods of providing education, health and children's services were being challenged by action orientated organisations such as Action for Better Education. These resulted in the development of innovative services such as Community Health Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, Community Schools. (vii)
8. Local Government responsibilities were changing from mainly serving property to providing services. Unheard of opportunities for participation in planning were being provided by some municipal councils. More women were becoming municipal councillors. (viii)
9. New methods of community communication were beginning to develop. In some neighbourhoods libraries assisted with community newspapers and other publications which promoted public participation in planning. Changes in media technology (for example printing and radio) helped to make this possible. (ix)
10. New movements were developing around the liberation of women. There began to be a recognition of the specific contribution to town planning which can be made by women. (x).

1968, A Turning Point in Town Planning contd. (page 4)

References and Notes

Explanation 1.

All documents referred to are in the Crow Collection at the Victoria University of Technology, Footscray Campus. There is access to the Crow Collection Room any time that the campus library is open. The Collection has been catalogued and can be accessed through OPAC for books and periodicals.

Explanation 2.

The working papers and other unpublished material will be for some people the most valuable resource provided by the Crow Collection.

- i. Ivan Illyich's "Celebration of Awareness", Jane Jacobs' "Death and Life of American Cities"; Hugh Stretton's "Ideas for Australian Cities"; Loenie Sandercock's "Cities for Sale" and others such are in the Crow Collection.

The published books and the unpublished working papers for the three parts of "Plan for Melbourne" by Ruth and Maurie Crow are also in the Collection. They are "Plan for Melbourne" Part 1 "Facts and Principles" (1968); Part 2. "Blueprint for Change... Community Services, Transport and Urban Renewal" (1970); and Part 3 "An Objection (Alternative) to the Melbourne Regional Plan Proposals" (1972).

The Crow Collection file of the Ecoso Exchange Newsletters dates from 1967 when this amateur, little, radical publication was called "Irregular". The newsletters have been indexed and can be used as a resource about some of the planning ideas from 1967 to the present day. Although mainly about Victoria some newsletters do contain some information from other states and from overseas.

- ii. The Collection includes the Australian Labour Party town planning policies enunciated by Gough Whitlam and Tom Uren, and booklets published by the Victorian Branch of Labour Party in the early 1970s, such as Colin Benjamin's "Let's Be Human".
- iii. The report from the Living Standards Convention includes papers by urban planners such as Prof. Dennis Winston, social planners, trade unionists and municipal councillors.

Also in the Collection are documents from Action for Adequate Child Care which was established, in Victoria, through trade union action in 1968.

Some documents in the NSW "Green Bans" campaigns are also in the Collection.

- iv. The working papers from the National Radical Ecology Conference, held in Melbourne in 1975, are a rich source of material on how these conservation organisation (The ACF and CCV) began to be concerned about urban issues.

The students movement campaigned on environmental issues. For example, in Victoria, they campaigned for bike routes and linear creek paths which are beginning to be a feature of the metropolis.

- v. The publication and working papers of the "CAN Report" ("Citizens Action-plan for North and West Melbourne"), 1972, written by fifty members of the North Melbourne Association are in the Collection. A report by Maurie Crow "Unfinished Business" 1986, reports on what happened to these alternative ideas. There is a number of other examples of alternative plans (and in some cases, reports on what resulted from them) in the Collection.
- vi. The Collection has some material on the Cosme utopian colony which was established in Paraguay by Australians, in the late nineteenth century as well as about some current alternative life style settlements.
- vii. In the Crow Collection there are numerous books and articles about the process of creating community. for example, "Doing It Together" by Sophie Inwald published by Community Child Care in the mid 1970s.
- viii. The Collection includes some of publications and working papers of the Community Planning Groups in the neighbourhoods of the Melbourne Municipality, and the working papers and published documents of the Melbourne City Council's Consultation on Children's Services and several other community consultations.

The booklet "Community Consumerism and Class" by Ruth and Maurie Crow may be a useful resources for some people researching this area.

- ix. The Collection has working papers and reports on establishing the North Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre and the North Melbourne News both of which have been strongly linked to local government through the local municipal library.
- x. Articles by Mercia Ferrier (using the pen-name Marion in honour of Marion Burley Griffin) were published in the Royal Australian Planning Institute Journal during the 1970s. These are in the Crow Collection, so also are a number of articles by Ruth and Naurie Crow as well as much other material.

Planning History Seminar
March 1993

The Crow Collection
A Resource for Planning History

The Crow Collection at the Footscray Campus of the Victoria University of Technology Library includes books, reports, working papers, talk aids, news clippings and other material which has been used and or written by Ruth and Maurie Crow during the past fifty years.

The Collection provides an historic overview of urban and labour issues including printed documents, a comprehensive set of political pamphlets from the 1930s, and 1940s and manuscripts such as working papers on urban issues from the 1960s to the 1990s.

The printed documents in the Collection has been catalogued. The label Crow Coll. has been used for books and periodicals and Crow Coll.P. for pamphlets. The unpublished material has been filed and listed. The Collection can be accessed through OPAC.

A Crow Collection Association has been formed and incorporated. The Association publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, "Ecoso Exchange". This newsletter is a continuation of a newsletter produced by Ruth and Maurie Crow when they were members of an organisation called "The Town planning Research Group". This was formed in 1967 to help organise the Trade Union's Living Standard Convention.

In 1972 Ruth and Maurie Crow were awarded one of the first Robin Boyd Awards by the Victorian Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. The citation stated that it was for their "notable lay contribution to the literature of planning".

The next year, 1973 the Crows were awarded the prestigious Farrett Medal by the Town and Country Planning Association. Their contribution to researching and presenting alternatives to official plans was given as one of the reasons for this honour being bestowed on them.

In the early 1980s Maurie Crow was one of the team which was presented with a Victorian Government Energy Award. This was for the book "Seeds for Change - Creatively Confronting the Energy Crisis" and the reports on applying the principles in the "Seeds" model to neighbourhoods in North Melbourne and Nunawading).

Last year, (1992) Sheila Byard (Hon Sec of the Crow Collection Association) and Christine Carolane (Research Worker) were given a Royal Australian Planning Institute "honourable mention" for a project based on the children's services documents in the Crow Collection.

Ruth Crow was involved in a number of innovative community movements from the 1940s and 1950s. During these years Maurie was involved in the trade union movement and was one of the founders of the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations. Although there are some documents (for example on child care and education) dating back to these earlier years most of the significant planning documents, in the Crow Collection, date from the mid 1960s to 1990.