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## ... And I Feel Fine

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EDITORIAL



## ... And I Feel Fine

### Apocalypse Soon?

I had a little bit of a meltdown at a coffee break during the recent meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning – North America’s gathering of university planning faculty. It’s not typically a high-key emotional atmosphere, but I was truly thrown for a loop by a photo display of past meetings. There I was, among colleagues, as we hosted the 2016 meeting in Portland. In the picture, taken about two weeks before the U.S. election, we are all grinning widely. I had passed out lapel pins with Michelle Obama making a side-eye face to all the members of the Faculty Women’s Interest Group and the Planners of Color; we were holding joint workshops and enjoying the ever-increasing diversity of the Association. My fellow housing researchers had big plans to push forward the fair housing agenda, forty years overdue but finally resurrected; likewise environmental justice and taking climate change seriously were surely solidly prioritized.

Trying to imagine how I would have reacted in that moment if I had any inkling of how the next 7 years would unfold made my head spin. Looking at this past-me, I could viscerally remember that feeling of certainty in progress and forward momentum. I wouldn’t even describe it as an expectation – it was simply an assumption. Of course, as a planner, I’ve always been aware of the multiplicity of futures and the many systems and forces beyond our immediate control, but I was also a person who went poking around only so far past the myths of western liberalism. Our actual present – our current, shared global circumstance – would have been a nightmare vision that seemed impossible.

So, a minor crack-up before rushing off to watch students’ presentations and meet old classmates – but I kept thinking about that picture, and about how much more *authentically* optimistic I am now, even as the things I care most deeply about in my work and community and life have been stalled, derailed, undone. In realizing that the future I was so sanguine about was never inevitable, and the present we’re in now was never necessary, I’m able to ask – why *not* expect something altogether otherwise to be on the horizon? Indeed, why not insist on it – a practice I learn from Afro-futurists and abolitionists projecting a world freed from racial, caste, gender, and class hierarchies, a vision of thriving, interdependent communities existing harmoniously with nature. Imagining this world in the distance, waiting to rise – I can only embrace the end of the world *as we know it*.

In her incredibly bracing conference keynote, Antonia Darder insisted on our confronting the real state of the world today, and on our recognizing that if planning cannot evolve from an incremental, linear approach that assumes forward progress, it will never be able to address the multi-layered, intertwined crises of ecology, economy, and politics we’re facing today. She demanded we take up new methods of learning and collaboration to do planning for the end of this world. The challenge is bridging between our work today and what we must do to bring to fruition our wildest freedom dreams.

### In This Issue

The papers in this issue are particularly well suited to contemplating how to teach and practice for planning towards futures we might barely be able to imagine, but we know we need. Taken together, we are invited to think more specifically about the future and how we might envision it, and about the

difficulty of accurately rendering the past in order to make repairs. The authors analyze planners' doing the hard work of bringing publics and knowledges into dialogue to make choices about right now that will resonate far into the future. In the *Interface*, this reflection is enhanced by online storymaps that illustrate each case. Finally, we are left with reflections on the long career of an inspiring scholar-practitioner whose work has helped many of us to imagine more freely and hope more fervently for the new world to be born.

Leading off the issue, Ferry van de Mosselaer, Dominique Vanneste & Patrick van der Duin consider the future very explicitly as they assess a case of collaborative planning in the Netherlands and develop the idea of 'recalibration' of expectations as a productive practice of political negotiation and collective decision-making. Planners were in an emergent and adaptive process that brought to the surface the inadequacy of linear, instrumental planning decision-making.

Next, Bjorn Sletto describes a long-standing engagement planning with marginalized and colonized people, where 'Dreams of Mud and Concrete' connect the past – as told in complicated, fragmented, and sometimes ambivalent memory stories – to current decisions towards more socially and ecologically just futures. Recognizing the past as ambiguous, rather than as fully documented and understood, he argues, renders the present more uncertain and the future, wide-open.

In the third article, Maria Alina Rădulescu, Wim Leendertse, and Jos Arts document how planners used co-creation as a process to expand participation beyond just a few moments for citizen input. This case demonstrates how this new approach offered opportunities for creative capacity-building, but also remained constrained by the options and decision timeframe defined beyond the co-creation group. Likewise, Alexa Gower, Mette Hotker, and Carl Grodach find planners trying new tools for engaging the public – in this case, digital development models – and attempting to balance the realities of narrowly defined development regulations with the potential to create multiple future scenarios for consideration. In both of these papers, planners have tools and processes that could support more expansive future visioning and decision-making, but the realistic scope of the task at hand tamps down that potential. The socio-political frameworks that define what is to be considered possible are recognizable across contexts.

In the final research article, Emily Barrett names Whiteness as the framework constraining a data-driven planning process intended to address historical and systemic racism in Lexington, Kentucky. Without being able to 'see' racism in the process, an attempt to repair material harms ends in 'further study' and unsatisfied feelings for participants. This article depicts another challenge for planners attempting to wrench American cities away from racialized property regimes – processes that are well-meaning, "trauma-informed," and ultimately devoid of action.



In the *Interface*, "'Seeing Like a Citizen': Rethinking City Street Transformations Through the Lens of Epistemic Justice,' Emilia Smeds and Ersilia Verlinghieri bring together a group of planners who call for "ensuring a fair distribution of access to transport services, to a broader engagement with citizen knowledges and ideas percolating within society regarding just forms of mobility." The cases described in the *Interface* are linked to multimedia storymaps of streets and public spaces, built from the diverse knowledges of their users.

The issue concludes with two review essays about Leonie Sandercock's new collection of articles and personal reflecting, *Mapping Possibility*. In a dialogue piece, Valerie Stahl and Robert Beauregard consider Sandercock's career in light of changes to the planning academy and the university, asking whether today's planning scholars would be able to achieve the wide-ranging and intellectually exciting arc of Sandercock's scholarship, art, and practice. While not particularly hopeful about the future of the university, each takes lessons about being of value as an educator and community member. Finally, *Mapping Possibility* is reviewed by Patsy Healey, who provides the précis: "The book is not just an autobiographical review of one of the most thoughtful and inspiring writers in the planning field. It is also about how to open up possibilities for life enhancing futures in communities at the harsh margins of contemporary anglo-american social order." If I may add, this is an especially useful

book for reading right here and now, if we want to learn, build community, make art, and usher in the end of the world.

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