As did so many of my colleagues, I began my professional career as an "urbanist" in the late 1950s. Through a combination of luck and some skill, I have been able to respond, seemingly successfully, to a range of different and often challenging assignments given me by varied private and community groups. Along the way I have picked up my share of honorific titles; joined a reasonable number of professional planning organizations; delivered what seems to be in retrospect an abnormally large number of speeches at planning conferences; and for better or worse, written a number of papers and books concerned with urban problems. I state these credits here, not to impress, but to provide a reference point for the critical observations that appear in this book concerning the role of the planning profession.

Indeed, even at the outset it can be said that one need not look far for evidence, even if anecdotal, to show that the impact of the planning profession on the quality of urban life has been marginal at best and, at times, negative. Certainly, twenty years of federal planning assistance programs have not visibly built up the planning capacity of local governments or improved the quality of local life. Indeed, the prime beneficiaries of such aid seem to be, not local governments or local residents, but local and national consultants.

Most plans prepared by most city planners have failed to pay heed to the many culturally and economically determined differences in life style of residents of the nation's cities and suburban areas. Plans, when heeded, have often either led to an allocation of scarce resources away from the least advantaged members of urban society or, as in urban renewal, had a directly negative effect on their lives. Somewhat surprisingly, even the more affluent members of society have not found their legitimate needs and their observed behavior patterns reflected in most community plans.

Planners leaving the local scene for Washington have not fared appreciably better. Many have participated in the development of policies and proposals to reform federal institutions. Consequently, their reports have proposed basic structural reforms and a "coordinated" federal response to urban problems. Not reflecting the basic pluralism inherent in both the political and the institutional facts of life, their reports have had little or no impact. Other planners, not so involved in government efforts at basic reform, have been asked at times to draft planning criteria for local governments to meet prior to receipt of federal aid. Their work has generally resulted in planning

models based on a rationale, more appropriate to the college classroom than to cities and towns facing complex political, social, economic, and environmental problems.

It is not easy to pinpoint the reasons for the impotence of the planning profession. I, for one, am convinced, however, that a good part of the blame rests on the unwillingness of planners—and indeed of clients and constituents—to challenge ideas in common currency concerning professional goals, patterns of behavior, and techniques. In this regard, I am convinced, as the articles in this book will show, that for too many years most planners have incorrectly assumed that their commitment to the liberal political tradition required uncritical acceptance of rationalism as a point of departure. Partly for this reason, unproven approaches and such phrases as "long-range planning" and "interdisciplinary analysis" have been uncritically elevated to the position of prescriptions for professional behavior. In the process the planners clear responsibility to link his and other value sets to professional tasks has often been abdicated. Similarly, in the process, the fiction has been widely maintained that his work was above politics and that his professional credentials were somehow superior to those of elected officials or "politically" appointed administrators.

It should be clear by now that I am not satisfied either with the way my profession has developed or with the direction it seems to be taking. I should like to see David Riesman's somewhat premature comments concerning the planner come true; that is, I wish planners could begin to "become reasonably weary of cultural definitions that are systematically trotted out to rationalize the inadequacies of city life today, for the well to do as well as for the poor."* Only if they do so will they be able to contribute to a much-needed national reappraisal of the role of professional planners in future efforts to solve urban problems—a reappraisal that should involve government officials at all levels as well as community and private groups.

I have prepared this volume in the hope that it will contribute to the needed national dialogue concerning the role and impact of the planner in developing relevant national as well as local urban policies and programs. It contains many of the articles I have written over the past dozen years. Selection of each was premised on two primary objectives—first, my desire to offer a consistent and relevant critique of the planning profession and, second, my interest in proposing to

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*David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd (New York: Doubleday, 1953), p. 348.

the planner, his clients, and his constituents, several relevant alternatives to current approaches.

I have included several papers and articles that offer commentary on current national urban policies and programs. Not to do so would have denied the fact that for the most part national policies and programs provide the context and the environment within which professional planners work. Such an omission would also have weakened my plea that planners relieve themselves of their positivist tendencies and, in effect, become relevant.