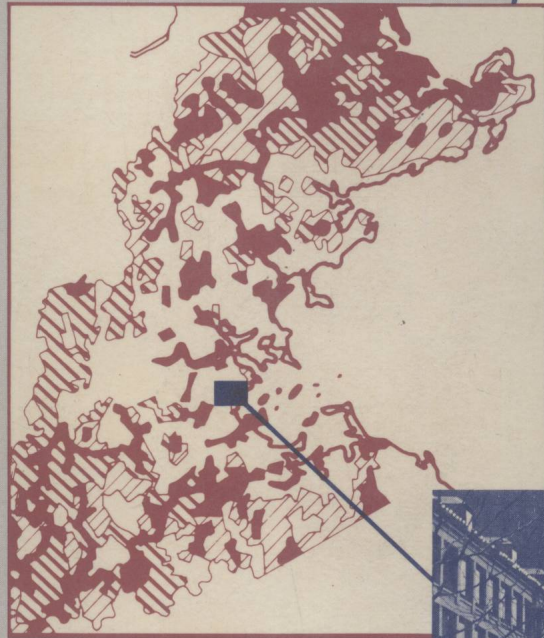


Land-Use Planning

FROM GLOBAL TO
LOCAL CHALLENGE

Julius Gy. Fabos



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LAND-USE PLANNING: FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL CHALLENGE

Julius Gy. Fabos



A Dowden & Culver book

Chapman and Hall
New York London

8070228

First published in 1985 by
Chapman and Hall
29 West 35th Street, New York NY 10001

Published in Great Britain by
Chapman and Hall Ltd
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

© 1985 Dowden and Culver

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0 412 25200 7 (cased edition)
ISBN 0 412 25210 4 (paperback edition)

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Fabos, Julius Gy.

Land use planning.

"A Dowden & Culver book."

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Land use—Planning. I. Title.

HD108.6.F32 1984 333.73'17 84-12076

ISBN 0-412-25200-7

ISBN 0-412-25210-4 (pbk.)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Fabos, Julius Gy.

Land use planning.—(Environmental resource management).—(A Dowden & Culver book)

1. Land use—United States—Planning

I. Title II. Series

333.73'0973 HD205

ISBN 0-412-25200-7

ISBN 0-412-25210-4 Pbk

LAND-USE PLANNING

FROM GLOBAL

TO LOCAL CHALLENGE

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State University of New York, Binghamton

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To my wife, Edith

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book, nearly two decades in the making, would never have been written without the help of the agencies, groups and individuals who have given me both the opportunities to practice and help in formulating the ideas it explores. The experiences which have influenced this book can be divided into three categories. First, I have been fortunate enough to serve as a consultant for numerous planning activities ranging from large-scale, multistate projects to site planning and from public to private concerns. Second, I have been lucky to work at the University of Massachusetts with the Metropolitan Landscape Planning (METLAND) group, a stimulating research team which has contributed greatly to my work. This interdisciplinary group not only helped me to perpetuate a strong land-use ethic, but also involved me in significant innovations in land-use planning. Third, I have had the opportunity to test many of these ideas in my teaching through planning studios and through the synthesis of land-use planning trends and activities in planning theory courses.

While working as a consultant to several federal, state, regional, and local agencies, I came to realize that the current land-use planning literature, with its primary focus on local land-use control, fails to present accurately the practice of land-use decision making. The individuals and agencies who especially helped me to expand my views in this area were: Harry Schwartz, a former chief planner of the North Atlantic Regional Water Resource Study coordinated by the United States Corps of Engineers; Robert Ross, Chief Landscape Architect for the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service; Bernard Berger, former director of the Water Resources Research Center at the University of Massachusetts; Gerald Patten of the United States Department of Interior, National Park Service; Benjamin Isgur, formerly the State Conservationist of the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service in Massachusetts; several members of the planning staffs of the New England River Basin Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management; numerous town

planners and officials of the towns and cities of Amherst, Nantucket, Burlington, Greenfield and Springfield in Massachusetts, and Manchester in Connecticut; and Douglas Cox of Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization together with planners of the Geelong Region, and the town of Bright in Victoria, Australia.

As a principal partner of Research Planning and Design Associates, Inc., and as a private consultant to real estate developers working on various projects, I have had to deal with those concerns of the private sector which have had an enormous impact on local land-use decisions. The individuals and corporations who have influenced me the most were Mark and Sol Lavitt of Lavitt Enterprises and several members of the Harford Realty Corporation for providing me with numerous land-use planning projects at various scales and locations.

Several of the assessment and computer-assisted planning techniques summarized in this book were developed by members and advisors of the landscape research team (METLAND) I established 14 years ago and have directed to date. The ideas of individual members during the course of the research have influenced my thinking throughout these years, and specific credit has already been given to those whose work appears within this book. Several of them commented on the initial outline and the manuscript, and their suggestions were included. My thanks go to Stephanie Caswell, Carl Carlozzi, Kimball Ferris, John Foster, Dorothy Grannis, Christopher Greene, Meir Gross, William Hendrix, Anthony Jackman, Spencer Joyner, Bruce MacDougall, Paul Shuldiner, Ross Whaley, and individuals who, during the years, have affected my thinking.

The third category of influence came from my teaching. The faculties and students of the Regional Planning and the Landscape Architecture programs at the University of Massachusetts have contributed significantly to my ideas. Several of these people have been acknowledged above. I extend my sincere thanks to the others.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge all those people who provided me with direct help during the writing and production of this book. Donald Coates as editor of this series gave me the impetus for the topic, has commented extensively on each draft, and provided me with continuous encouragement. I received other extensive reviews from Barrie Greenbie and Ervin Zube. Their constructive criticisms were most helpful. Daniel Bucko, Ellin Goetz, and Mark Jacobucci prepared the majority of the graphics, thus substantially improving this book. I wish to express a special note of gratitude to Helen Wise who edited this manuscript. Lastly and most importantly, this book is dedicated to my lovely wife Edith who has been my collaborator in every phase of its development from conception through its numerous drafts. The final responsibility for its content lies with me, but all of the people acknowledged shared in its creation.

INTRODUCTION

Societies make continuous changes in the environment and many of these changes result from some kind of land-use planning. Hence land-use planning can be looked upon as both an all-inclusive process and as a collection of related activities.

During the past two decades, this latter approach has dominated the thinking of land-use planners with the great majority of the land-use planning books written by planners and published in recent years in the United States having focused on one aspect of planning, namely land-use control. Among the representative books on land-use planning which are read more frequently by planners are Fred Bosselman and David Callies's *The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Planning* (1971); Charles Haar's *Land Use Planning: A Casebook on the Use, Misuse and Re-Use of Urban Land* (1971); Robert Healy's *Land Use and the States* (1976); and T. William Patterson's *Land Use Planning: Techniques of Implementation* (1979). All these books share a common theme: the description of legal devices used in controlling land uses. Furthermore, the great majority of devices and cases described in these books deal with land-use planning at the local level. Readers of these books may conclude that land-use planning is a highly specialized activity, which involves zoning, subdivision regulations, and other similar controls.

The underlying purpose of this book is to redefine land-use planning by presenting a more comprehensive, and perhaps a more accurate, description of relevant activities in the United States and other countries. Control has been a very important tool in American planning since the beginnings of the profession in the early twentieth century. Control, however, is primarily useful in dealing with those aspects of planning which aim to minimize future uncertainties based on past, often negative, experiences. Yet land-use planning, just like any other type of planning, can and should deal with positive opportunities of many kinds, an approach which calls for a different kind of thinking and often different tools and devices.

There are powerful reasons why control or the use of local regulation devices and state legislation have dominated recent planning literature, perhaps two of which stand out. First was the monumental failure during the 1950s of the physical planners who initiated insensitive, large-scale redevelopment projects in all major cities in the United States. Their work resulted in widespread public outrage well described in Jane Jacobs' classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Clearly the land-use planners who directed bulldozers to poor neighborhoods to replace them with luxury complexes and towering office structures made unforgettable mistakes. A control-oriented approach inevitably arose to curb their unreasonable and insensitive dreams.

The second reason for the change in focus can be attributed to the large influx in the 1960s into planning of teachers and students from the legal profession and from political science. Hitherto, no one discipline had dominated land-use planning. It is interesting to note the distribution of disciplines and professionals who founded the planning profession during the period 1890–1930. Among the 16 distinguished pioneers whose biographies have been recently published by Donald Krueckeberg in the *American Planner* (1983), five, or about one-third, came into planning from law and political science; five came from physical planning backgrounds, of whom three were landscape architects and two were engineers; two were economists; one came from natural science (forestry); and three came from a liberal education without any disciplinary training.

The work and writing of these pioneers represent a much greater range of land-use planning approaches, procedures, tools, and devices than more recent practitioners with their control-oriented, legal approach. Currently we see a renewed interest not only in the pioneers but in the contribution of other disciplines to land-use planning. For instance, studio instruction is once again on the increase in planning schools (Lang, 1983).

This book is a response to the renaissance in land-use planning and to such other phenomena as the rapid increase in scientific knowledge; unprecedented technological advancements; major societal changes which are modifying the values and perceptions of people; and finally, and equally important, a profound reversal of previous migration patterns into city centers.

THE PLANNERS' CHANGING ROLE

Phenomena such as these provide land-use planners with a set of new opportunities and, perhaps, force them to redefine their role. Part one of

this book examines the evolution of such trends and their present day implications, showing how planners, can no longer respond to a single problem with a single-purpose device, but rather with an awareness of a whole set of interrelated factors. The role emerging for the planner is one of a synthesizer of these ever-changing forces, capable of making informed decisions.

In the first place, it is the land-use planner's role to help to define the issues for the short, and especially the long, run. In dealing with long-term issues, such as a potential decline of a development a few decades hence, the planner may be able to pave the way for less costly future change without incurring extra cost for the initial planned use. For example, during the baby boom we built schools and colleges to satisfy rapidly growing demand. As the population growth rate has declined in recent years many schools and colleges have had to be closed. Land-use planners using demographic forecasts could have foreseen such occurrences. Using such information combined with creative thinking, planners could have envisioned a more flexible use, to change a school easily into offices, retirement homes, light industry, or recreational facilities, just to name a few.

In terms of scientific advancement, the planner's role is to interpret the results of rapidly increasing and available knowledge for land-use planning. Advancement in the understanding of ecological principles helps land-use planners to achieve a better "fit" between environment and use. More accurate measurements of pollutants can help in planning strategies to reduce environmental stresses. Scientific knowledge can aid in finding and assessing critical resources, determining development suitability for any kind of land use, and can even improve planning from data gathering through plan implementation. With scientific knowledge having more than doubled during the past decade, and expected to double again within the next 5 years, planners must search continuously for relevant information.

Technological changes are proving to be similarly rapid and momentous. As society in general has begun to choose to accept certain new technologies, reject others, and accept several with modifications, so land-use planners are making similar choices in those technological areas which clearly affect land-use planning. Technology is also providing planners with tools, such as computer graphic technology, capable of drastically changing the mode of previous land-use planning practices.

In order to deal with changing societal values, planners ought to understand the reasons why the various segments of our pluralistic society hold particular values. In place of the advocacy approach which grew out of the turbulent years of the 1960s, the planner's role is defined in this study more as that of a mediator among the opposing views. By simulating the various consequences of plans based on differing views, planners can aid not only in resolving conflict, but also in selecting more viable options.

With regard to international organizational changes, planners need to understand the contextual changes which have occurred in the United States since the 1950s when the new corporate, horizontal mode of organization started to replace the hierarchical mode. Most planners have, in the past, supported the hierarchical mode, with many advocating increased state and Federal governmental regulation and more power vested in regional agencies, thereby reducing the power of decision making at local levels. Current forces are clearly moving planning in the opposite direction, to less centralized and increasingly more local planning. These positive, welcome, and most helpful changes are described in Chapter 4.

Land-use planning and land management, which was carried out in the past by increasingly hierarchical and centralized organizations, have created the environment in which we live. The results are seemingly endless monocultural urbanscapes and monocultural ruralscapes. The question raised in the final chapter of part one is how these monocultural landscapes may affect our economic, social, ecological, and aesthetic well-being.

PLANNERS' RESPONSES TO FORCES

Planning is an activity, an ongoing process. Just as historical forces have been unfolding, so have decision makers' and planners' responses changed accordingly over time. In part two, this fascinating evolution is described together with a discussion of the whole spectrum of land-use planning activities from global concerns to local actions and site planning.

This evolution has already changed the role, the type, and the number of planners. Conflicts between the public and private interest have been sharpened. Recently, a new breed of planners trained in mathematics, operations research, statistics and computer technology, has appeared on the horizon, bringing high technology with its sophisticated modeling techniques into the decision-making arena. Equally important, and reflecting a trend to redistribute decision making in industries and government to lower levels, is the increased interest of planners in local decision making.

An analysis of all the changes indicates that land-use planning of the future will be more localized yet significantly more complex than previous utopian approaches. It also will be able to respond to the larger environmental context. As planners adopt high technology, and become part of an information network, they will be able to evaluate greater numbers of alternatives against many more pertinent criteria than they are able to do today. They also will be able to respond to a greater number of public concerns, and in fact make the planning process more democratic. They also will have the ability to simulate the consequences of actions not only in the context

of their primary, local impact, but also their impact on contribution on the region, the state, the nation, and beyond. To illustrate the above forecast, several innovative land-use planning cases at each level of planning are reviewed.

Since the theme of the book encompasses land-use planning from global to local concerns, three chapters focus on current land-use planning activities from the highest levels of government to site planning at the local level. This review shows that during the past two decades, planning in both the United States and other countries has become increasingly creative and innovative, contrary to the impression received from current land-use planning literature with its emphasis on control. It also takes issue with some other writers, who claim that the United States does not have a land-use policy.

The examination in Chapter 7 of land-use planning at the highest levels of government presents a whole range of activities. It also demonstrates clearly that the United States from its very beginnings has had a national land-use policy. This policy has not been accepted as valid by many planners, especially those advocates of control. Before hastening to advocate European techniques, themselves the response to different conditions, it is useful to understand the historical rationale for American land-use policy. The accompanying case studies illustrate the wide range of policy planning activities at the national multistate, and state levels.

In the United States, land-use planning innovations also have been plentiful at the substate level, namely in metropolitan area type planning and rural planning. While land-use controls once again have been very important in planning at this level, a closer examination of such land-use planning activities clearly reveals a great diversity in approaches and the involvement of many disciplinary planners, ranging from landscape architects to policy planners. Land-use planning at the local level has been clearly dominated by local land-use controls. This is the reason why, perhaps, the land-use planning literature is saturated with the description of legal devices. To redress the balance, in Chapter 9, several very important innovations in physical planning are described.

While land-use planners can learn much from recent and current planning, it is always fascinating to speculate about the near future. This speculation is especially fascinating at this particular time because never before has a society been exposed to such numerous and significant changes. Yet at the same time, and for the same reason, forecasting the future is more difficult. Thus part three of this book attempts to describe the future more in terms of the trends which have had the most profound impact on recent planning.

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