THE THEORY DEVELOPMENT:
LEARNING FROM THE UNITED STATES EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Throughout its history, planning has been influenced by the methods and technologies at its disposal. Since planning has commonly borrowed methods and technologies from other disciplines, its activity has been affected by broad movements in other disciplines’ concerns, methods, and technologies. As a result, planning activity, if it were undertaken correctly, has become a knowledge-based activity in which planners consciously interact with and advance methods and technologies developed in other disciplines. Through tracing the history of planning activity and its theory development, conscious planners can critically see that only to a certain extent can planning appropriately apply techniques developed first in other disciplines. In the future, instead of trying to remedy the inadequacies of methods and technologies derived from other disciplines, this paper argues that it is necessary to attack the problem at its origins by eradicating the presupposition of the need for planning. Through this view, planners can then redefine planning and develop new methods and technologies to generate the most positive outcomes of planning.

I. INTRODUCTION

There are various ways to trace the theory development of planning in the United States. This article will discuss the theory development of planning in the United States based on broad changes in the themes and approach to problems of planning activity since its early history to the end of the twentieth century. The six broad changes are planning as a search for the ideal city, planning as a search for the practical city, planning as a search for rational comprehensive solutions, planning as a search for optimal scientific solutions, planning as a search for political practical solutions, and planning as a search for managerial practical solutions. Comment will be made on the ways these changes have been affected by broad movements in design, engineering, social science, information science, urban politics, and management science concerns, methods and technologies. Within this framework, the extent to which the techniques developed first in other disciplines that have been applied in planning activity will be commented on as well.

Since its early history, planning has been influenced by the methods and technologies at its disposal. Methods provide guidance - through procedures, processes, and/or techniques that need to be followed - on how to accomplish planning tasks or attain planning goals. Technologies provide the means - the use of scientific methods, specific skills, models, and/or materials - by which the planning tasks can be accomplished and the planning goals can be attained. Given that planning activity as a broad-based activity has commonly borrowed methods and technologies from other disciplines, its subject matters and approach to problems have been affected by broad movements in other disciplines’ concerns, methods, and technologies.

There have been six broad movements that have profoundly affected planning activity*
since the late nineteenth century. These broad movements are subsequently in design, engineering, social science, information science, urban politics, and management science. The subject matters and approach to problems of planning activity at the turn of the twentieth century were affected by the concerns, methods and technologies of design. In the years between the mid 1910s-early 1930s, the mid 1930s-late 1950s, the early 1960s-late 1970s, the mid 1960s-early 1980s, and the mid 1980s-late 1990s, the subject matters and approach to problems of planning activity were affected by broad movements in engineering, social science, information science, urban politics, and management science concerns, methods and technologies, respectively.

II. PLANNING ACTIVITY IN THE ERA OF DESIGNING THE IDEAL CITY (1890S-MID 1910S)

In this earliest era of planning activity, planning was guided by the philosophy of physical environment determinism. The model of designing the ideal city was developed based on the ideology of the nineteenth century reformers and utopians, especially the visions of the utopian thinkers who held the belief that “reforming the physical environment can revolutionize the total life of a society.” (Fishman, 1996). Their ideal models were subjectively developed based on abstract ideals derived from social theory and their own philosophy. Planning activity in the years of this era was centered on creating the ideal city of the perspective of the creators, the utopians. Its subject matters were designing cities, parks, boulevards and new settlements, among others. Its approach to problems was reforming the physical environment through the reordering of space such as conceptualized in Howard’s Garden City and Le Corbusier’s Radiant City, and in the case of Burnham’s Beautiful City through reordering of space and implementing architectural ornaments emphasizing forms and aesthetics. The use of design skills, standards, and materials as well as relevant knowledge in design were the technologies needed to make the designing of the ideal city possible.

Howard’s Garden City proposed that in order to solve the problems of the cities, smaller, self-containing towns should be built around the city in the open countryside. Le Corbusier had a rather interesting solution: “...decongest the centers of our cities by increasing their density” (Hall 1988: 207). He proposed to use technology to create a more efficient city -the Corbusian Ideal City-, with its absence of crowded tenements and slums. Burnham’s monumental planning in the City Beautiful movement emphasized the symbols of civic order and unity that portrayed the economic power of the city. It was mainly concerned with the designing of public buildings, parks, streets and transportation, and promoting beautiful cities through form and aesthetics (Krueckenberg, 1983; Fogleson, 1986). While the ideal models of most utopians were rarely implemented, the City Beautiful ideal model was more accepted and implemented, since it fit the interests of influential business groups (Fogleson, 1996).

Broad movement in design concern, method, and technology at the turn of the twentieth century influenced the subject matter and approach to problems of the planning activity at that time, as seen in the City Beautiful movement. In his analysis about the origins of the city beautiful movement, Peterson (1983) characterized the phenomenon of the City Beautiful movement “...as a complex cultural movement [involved] more than building arts and urban design. Three concepts are essential to this reconstruction: municipal art, civic improvement, and outdoor art. Each played a vital, if now forgotten, role in launching the movement; each had distinct historical roots predating the Chicago World’s Fair; and each began with different
constituencies” (Peterson, 1976 quoted from Krueckeberg, 1983).

The concern on reforming and beautifying physical environment through reordering space and implementing architectural ornaments in the City Beautiful was characterized by the enormous promotions of decorative art - sculpture, murals, and stained glass - and collaborative works for public display through the late nineteenth century. The planting of street trees, the use of color in civic design, and campaigns against billboards and smoke were backed by many artists and architects as well as civic improvement societies in hundreds of cities which formed a national network of civic organizations. Planners and architects were inspired by the influential writings of Charles Mulford Robinson. The American Park and Outdoor Art Associations, Municipal Arts League, Municipal Arts Society, and the American Civic Association were formed and publications such as the Municipal Affairs quarterly were created. There was widespread promotion of a national park system in the wilderness, an agenda for city parks and civic art, planned urban development, better housing and sanitation and traffic safety (Krueckeberg, 1983).

To the extent of providing guidance on how to undertake design tasks such as reordering space or to attain design goals such as orderly and harmonious space and beauty through the design procedure that need to be followed and techniques to be used, planning has appropriately applied techniques developed first in design. The design-based techniques were indeed fit for reordering space, creating harmony, and inspiring future cities, as seen in the 1909 Plan of Chicago and some others from the point of view of that time. These techniques, however, were only applicable to those extents; they were neither applicable nor appropriate for solving the ills of urban society at the turn of the twentieth century. This failure led to the era of designing the practical city.

III. PLANNING ACTIVITY IN THE ERA OF DESIGNING THE PRACTICAL CITY (MID 1910S-EARLY 1930S)

By the mid 1910s, the City Beautiful movement and its concern with “monumentality, empty aesthetics, and grand effects for the well-to-do, and general impracticality” were being criticized as impractical (Wilson, 1989 quoted from Campbell and Fainstein, 1996). Its over-reliance on aesthetics and neglect on economy and efficiency concerns were criticized as well. While the ideal city attitudes still continued, as seen through Wright’s Broadacre City and Mumford’s Regional City in the 1930s, the era of designing the practical city had begun to take hold. The orientation of planning was now geared towards function and efficiency.

Planning in the era of designing the practical city was guided by the engineering and economic principles of efficiency. Its main concerns were the rational and efficient distribution of land-use and efficient transportation systems. Its approach to overcome heavy congestion and overcrowding caused by uncontrolled land use was through the physical layout of land-use zoning, the city street and transportation systems, central business districts, and parks as well as zoning regulations based on the different functions of urban areas. In transportation, planning activity sought to create “an efficient overall street system” (Foglesong, 1986) which rejected the City Beautiful’s standard street designs. The new street system was set up to be compatible with the city’s nature and its traffic patterns.

The use of zoning and subdivision ordinances was necessary to make rational land-use distribution possible, and the use of traffic-flow data, the data of the activities of the city, and transportation models, especially for forecasting, were necessary to create an efficient transportation plan possible. All of these were important factors
that sustained the master-plan focus in this era. The result was that by the end of the 1920s more than 750 communities in the United States adopted comprehensive ‘zoning’ plans.

The era of designing the practical city was focused on efficiency concerns (engineering input-output and economic investment-profits relations) as well as function concerns (the zoning of specific functions to specific areas), including a concern on efficient street and transit facilities. The early examples of the influence of engineering concern, method and technology may be seen in the 1909 plan for metropolitan Boston that provided a comprehensive study involving the relationship of the transportation modes and facilities such as railroads, terminals, and docks to the city plan, and the 1911 Plan for Dallas which included “recommendations on levees, a belt railroad, a union system, freight terminals, and grade crossings in addition to more traditional proposals for a civic center, parks, and playgrounds, and a system of parkways and boulevards” (Foglesong, 1986). More than that, enormous proposals and discussions in planning conferences between 1910 and 1920 talked about transportation planning and land-use zoning issues. Most of them were referred to the German model of land block system to regulate the height, bulk of buildings, and use of land as was first adopted in 1891 Frankfurt.

To the extent of having guidance on how “to maintain property values and the character of development in high-class retail and residential neighborhoods” (Foglesong, 1986), planning activity in this era had appropriately applied zoning developed first in the German zone system/land use planning. For the same benefit, planning activity of that time had also appropriately applied transportation models and forecasting techniques developed first in transportation planning. These techniques, however, were neither applicable nor appropriate for solving the problems of inefficient or im-

practical cities, as zoning became a justified tool for land speculations and undeveloped lands. As Albert Bettman, the lawyer in the well-known case Euclid v. Ambler argued, “...the ‘public welfare’ served by zoning was [only] the enhancement of the community’s property values.” (Hall, 1988). This failure led to the era of Rational Comprehensive Approach.

IV. PLANNING ACTIVITY IN THE ERA OF PURSUING RATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS (MID 1930S-LATE 1950S)

This era of the ‘golden age of planning’ was predominantly guided by the rational comprehensive approach. As planning became more rational and scientific, the emphasis was on analysis and comparisons of all alternative solutions using social science applications. While holding a set of assumptions, the rational comprehensive model asked for rationality through a comprehensive approach. This includes systematic sequences of long-range perspective, as well as in hierarchical geographical terms, and many other spatial terms. Systematic analyses, clear evaluation criteria, the dealing with complex problems, multiple goals, all possible alternatives and selecting the best alternative for future actions became parts of this whole process-oriented planning model. A set of underlying assumptions that accompanied this model was the consideration that planners were experts, and they were neutral. It was believed that there was a unifying interest of society and these planners worked for this supposedly unified public interest, even as this “public interest” was their own value. More than that, the expertise of planners of the time to apply particular techniques such as survey, analysis, forecasting and design was considered ‘enough’ to accomplish the tasks of the rational comprehensive planning accomplished and attain its goals.

The rational comprehensive model was constructed towards a fully process-ori-
entiated approach in the 1960s. In the United States, there was a tendency to emphasize the need for investigation and research to be able to predict the future, and the influence of social science on the rational comprehensive approach was very significant. Indeed, the rational comprehensive model was more advanced in the United States than it was in Europe. In Britain, the rational comprehensive approach was institutionalized into comprehensive land-use planning (Hall, 1988). By the mid 1950s, the process was still seen as a ‘one shot’ process without continuous revising as new information became available.

The subject matter and approach to problems of planning activity in this era, that of finding rational comprehensive solutions through a comprehensive approach with the use of survey techniques, quantitative and analytical models, various types of data, statistics, and computers, were influenced by broad movement in social science. Planning activity of the time captured the social science concerns on the need for sound theoretical-empirical bases on analysis. The broad movement in social science concerns, methods and technologies took place throughout the curricula of planning schools, books and articles in academic journals as well as academic conferences (Hall, 1988). Also, “a series of [social science] experiments in planning process and methods…” (Krueckeberg, 1983), occurred in the US in the 1940s and was funded by the federal government. These social science-oriented experiments were focused more on a systematic and linked process of study as well as intensive analysis and participation in policy-making rather than a physical design-oriented planning that took place mostly in Europe. They fit Davidoff and Reiner’s (1962) conclusion in their most celebrated article “A Choice Theory in Planning” that “there would have to be much reliance on skills and accumulated knowledge in related social sciences, law, ethics, statistics, and applied mathematics” (quoted from Faludi, 1973).

To the extent of giving rational explanations on all possible alternative solutions, planning activity in that era had appropriately applied techniques developed first in the social sciences. These techniques, however, were neither adequate nor meticulous enough for solving complex problems and attaining multiple goals related to diverse public interests that change over time. On the one hand, the one shot process of planning activity of that time was questioned since the condition was most likely outdated and the problems changed as soon as the process begins. This defectiveness led to the need, influenced by broad movement in information science, for a rational scientific planning system to determine the optimal city.

On the other hand, the process of decision making to come up with good policy recommendations based on the comprehensive approach was severely doubted. Its underlying assumptions as commonly used by positivists were increasingly criticized. The neutral-based and value-free decisions were questioned, as well as the capacity of planners to deal with such comprehensive approach. The term of public interest was also in question; rebirthing the Marxist view that planning lived in an environment with pluralism and inequality in power and voice. Planners of that time mostly ignored or overlooked political-based conflicts among certain groups. This ignorance led to the criticism of the rational comprehensive model and, in turn, to the rise of new approaches in planning, influenced by the American urban politics movement.

V. PLANNING ACTIVITY IN THE ERA OF PURSUING OPTIMAL SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS (EARLY 1960S-LATE 1970S)

Only at a further advancement that occurred in the 1960s, as planning became fully rational and scientific, and seen as a continuous process rather than an outcome-oriented activity, did the rational model with
the influence of the general systems theory, cybernetics, and information theory (Chadwick, 1971) earn more popularity both in the United States and Europe. In this stage, the rational model provided “the metatheory for planning activity” (Fainstein, 2000).

Planning activity in this era was guided by the philosophy of rational scientific determinism, brought by information science. The model of determining optimal city was developed based on the ideology of the Cold War strategists, especially the Cold War weapon system experts who believe that they could determine the optimal solutions of the complex weaponry problems, and setup the optimal strategies to attain a series of complex goals to win the Cold War, through rational scientific models using complex information science methods. Broad movement in information science’s concerns, methods, and technologies affected the subject matters and approach to problems of planning activity at that time. This movement took place largely through academic programs and publications, thesis writings, and other academic mediums.

The subject matter and approach to problems of planning activity of that time were to find optimal solutions to complex problems and interrelated goals over time through robust data gathering, processing and analysis using various optimizing techniques such as operations research, mathematical models, statistics, cost-benefit analysis, linear programming, dynamic models, long-range forecasting models and computers. In this era, continuous monitoring and feedback in a system were incorporated in planning activity in all stages and all levels of analysis. The use of these optimizing techniques was necessary to make updated rational comprehensive planning possible (Friedmann, 1996, Harris, 1996).

To the extent of providing guidelines for decision makers to rationally and scientifically justify their “neutral” political deci-

sions while using public resources, planning activity in the years of this era had appropriately applied techniques developed first in information science. These techniques, however, were neither accurate nor realistic in determining the optimal city, as “the rights of man” (Marxist terminology) or the natural rights of citizens in terms of liberty, property, and security as epitomized in the American Constitution were merely political rights characterized by an attitude of “non-interference”: no one can take away anyone else’s rights. The so-called optimal city then became optimal only for those who actually have liberty, property, and security and disregarded those who have not. This failure led to the rebirth of a profound question in planning theory—who gets what? As Hall (1988) stated, the practitioners of that time were concerned “only with the everyday business of planning in the real world,” that is, they still held the master plan and zoning attitude. The inability of the scientific-systems planning to solve complex problems was clearly noted, as even Britton Harris, in 1975, declared that he “no longer believed that the more difficult problems of planning could be solved by optimizing methods” (Hall, 1988). This failure also led to the rise of other new approaches in planning, adding to the new approaches arisen from the failure, illuminated by the American urban politics movement, of rational comprehensive planning.

VI. PLANNING ACTIVITY IN THE ERA OF PURSUING POLITICAL PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS (MID 1960S-EARLY 1980S)

In the first decade of this era, there were increasing numbers of critics for the rational comprehensive and scientific planning, especially in the context of American urban politics. Rational comprehensive and scientific planning required the garnering of huge amounts of complete and accurate data, which was not really realistic. Later, even though it claims to be a purely
rational and neutral-based, process, it was still swayed by political interests of the owners of liberty, property, and security, the dominant political-interest groups. As a consequence, there was a need for an emergence of new approaches that were driven in the interests of those that did not have liberty, property, and security. These include incremental planning, advocacy planning, equity planning, participatory planning, environmental planning, social planning, flexible planning, urban renewal planning, community planning, neighborhood planning, and strategic planning. Some of these approaches will be described further, while others can be easily found in the standard planning theory literature.

Unlike the rational comprehensive planning, incremental planning (which is actually not planning at all) held the view that within a pluralist political structure, it was impossible to have a common public interest (Hall, 1988). In perceiving that comprehensiveness is hard to achieve, incremental planners used the information that was available at that time, and work in 'increments', that is, they “muddle through” to consider necessary changes. Equity and advocacy planning are planning types that include in their considerations the interests of the common public (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1996). Advocacy planning, as initiated by Davidoff, is an attempt to incorporate the voices or values that would not otherwise be represented by the incremental approach. Through advocacy planning, planners can advocate the interests of those who are out-of-reach and powerless to represent their own interests. Thus, advocacy planning is a representation of certain social groups by advocacy planners, using the applied techniques of law. Similar to advocacy planning, equity planning deals with equity and the distribution of resources and power. Using a redistribution approach, equity planners “enlist the participation of the public or client group in determining substantive goals and explicitly accept planning as a political rather than a strictly scientific endeavor.” (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1996).

Broad movement in urban politics concerns, methods and technologies, affected planning activity in this era. While policing the process and outcome of planning was the concern of the planning activity in this era, the subject matters and approach to problems of planning activity in this era was to pursue an urban outcome that fits with one’s own interests and by one’s own definition through incorporating the role of the state, the elitists, the regime, the investors and other interest groups as well as the so-called common public through different technologies such as the use of public hearings and public participation. The various models of policing the process and outcome of planning in this era were developed based on different, often conflicting, ideologies and philosophies, which asked the questions of who governs and who gets what as related to the structure of political power as well as to political interests and/or market forces. They were the ideology and philosophy of the capitalist, liberal, political economists, environmentalist, Marxist planning theorists, as well as dominant individuals, firms, and city governments that guided planning activity of that time.

The concerns on the urban outcome arose through the influences of the hundreds of protests that took place in various cities in the 1960-s, “the Community Action Program, the passage of the Voting Rights Act, the dissolution of the civil rights movement and the rise of black power, white suburban flight and black urban in-migration, and the election in 1967 of black mayors in Cleveland and Gary” (Eisinger, 1997), as well as the influences of the writings of the well known theorists – Meyerson, Banfield, Hunters, Dahl, Lindblom, Faludi, Altsuler, Kaufman, Webber, Friedmann, Harvey, Hall, Lokjine, and Castells, among others.

To the extent of providing political justifications on why and how to pursue an ur-
ban outcome for one's own interests by one's own definition, planning activity in this era had appropriately applied techniques developed first in urban-politics related disciplines. These techniques, however, were neither useful nor successful in policing the urban process and outcome for the benefit of the targeted groups or communities. Soon after the political practical planning took place, the urban poor were still poor, the unheard were still unheard, the homeless were still homeless, the out of reach were still out of reach, or the polluted urban environment was still polluted, while the advocate planners, the participatory planners, the community planners, and the many so-called activist planners are presenting their "pseudo success stories" from seminars to seminars, held in red carpet convention rooms. While the resources accessible to the city now became extinct or even go into deficits, the administrations were still inefficient, the regulations were continuously made without knowing who would benefit from them, and the decisions were made arbitrarily. This led to the need for planning activity that focuses on entrepreneurship and managing the city, emphasizing the finance, the administration, the regulations, the operators, and the governance, influenced by broad movement in management science.

VII. PLANNING ACTIVITY IN THE ERA OF PURSUING ENTREPRENEURIAL PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS (EARLY 1980S-LATE 1990S)

The planning activity in the previous era provided more political directions rather than scientific guidance to decision makers, directed to help those who had less liberty, security and property. Even so, the urban poor were still poor, the out of reach were still out of reach, and the unheard were still unheard. Not only that, adding to these problems were the emergence of urban crises, which were even worse than Detroit's racial tension and poverty that erupted in the 1960s, that were found and cried out from cities across the country. They became headline news across the country as governments from all levels strived to keep hundreds of cities away from bankruptcy. Even the city of New York, which was for years immune to crisis, in the second half of 1970s found itself in the face of bankruptcy and unable to pay its bonds (Aronson and Schwartz, 1981).

This led to a growing criticism, mostly from business practitioners and middle class families who are concerned that their tax money was being inefficiently and ineffectively used by those who claim to care for the less advantaged citizens in the name of equality or income redistribution. They felt that they held the burden of the crisis in the form of rising property taxes, traffic congestion, increased urban crimes, unsaved schools, drug dealings in their own or nearby neighborhoods, youth delinquencies, and other "problems of the modern city". More than that, the academia, mostly those from business and management schools, then crystallized the blame for the mismanagement of the cities, not only to the mayors and other public officials, but also to the planners who claimed to know how to advocate for, bring equity to, and represent the various needs of the urban citizens without scientifically knowing who will pay and how political practical plans could take place in the market arena. These critics believe that the private sector, by its nature, could do better than the public in this arena. Not only does the private sector know best about what the urban citizens really need, it could also predict the magnitudes and directions of the city's needs in the shadow of the private world and intercity competitions, through a combination of management science approaches to decision making and business techniques to attract investments and make profits. Instead of using private money for certain public interests that result in urban crises, now, planners of this time saw it as a time to use public funds for private develop-
ment, inspired by the promise of reinventing government and the public for private partnerships initiatives.

The subject matters and approach to problems of planning activity in this era were to set strategies for solving various urban crisis problems through managing scarce resources using scientific management techniques and innovative business applications, developed first in management science. The technology not only includes the use of management science techniques from traditional fields such as operations research, mathematics, statistics, and industrial engineering, but now also from the globalization of the economy, the financial market, the changes in public policy, and improvements in technology, most notably communications and information technology.

To the extent of delivering management science considerations to public decision making for private interests, planning has appropriately applied techniques developed first in management science. It deals with the trends of city operations consisting of people, materials, technology and money, the capacity of human actors in city operations, the city operation models and using them to create an understanding of the trends of the city. The use of these techniques, however, was not fit for preparing guidance to public decision making for the urban citizens’ interests, as Al Gore’s “Reinventing Government” and the Republicans’ “Contract with America” failed to convince urban voters, regardless of resistance by the bureaucracy (as both parties claim to be the reason that their reinventing governments did not garner support).

VIII. CONCLUSION

This article discusses the way in which planning activity in the United States has changed over the years. It is quite interesting, the concerns, the subject matters, and the approach to problems of planning activity have been evolved and accumulated over time. Many new problems and challenges are substantially the repetition of the old problems and challenges but with different environment, opportunities, technologies, and interests. The ways in which planning activity takes over these new problems and challenges, however, are totally different than those advocated in the old ones. They often extend the boundary of planning.

The relations between planning and the methods and technologies available to it are important to be noted. As a broad-based discipline, planning is sensitive to the influence of the methods and technologies from other disciplines. This implies that planners should always be aware of current movements and see if such movements are already affecting planning through their ‘loaned’ methods and technologies. If this is the case, then planners need to adapt themselves to the changes and deliberately review their planning concerns and approaches.

IX. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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* It is necessary to distinguish the terms of planning activity, the activity of planning, and activity in planning. Planning activity is the activity in which planning is the primary knowledge used. The activity of planning covers a series of activities in which planning is undertaken, such as survey, analysis, forecasting, and design. The activity in planning includes brainstorming, discussion, public hearing, and modeling.