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THE ROLES OF PLANNER AND DEVELOPER IN THE NEW COMMUNITY*

MARSHALL KAPLAN*

For some years, the popular press has been deluged by professional and lay articles critical of the way people were choosing to structure the physical environment. Opprobriums such as slurb, sprawl, and scatteration have long been utilized by planners to describe the effects of the urbanization process. It has become rather the conventional wisdom to look at America's landscape and cry "alas, it could have been different. If only we had rational planning techniques." Generally, the culprits range from those "evil speculators," those under-capitalized but over stimulated builders, those boys at city hall, those unincorporated areas, those fourlegged personalities—the automobiles, and finally, those people.

By 1960 the cry of protest had grown loud. Indeed the planner had picked up powerful allies: the downtown interests, the cityphiles and the intellectuals. Yet "for all the chorus of protests, most Americans seemed strongly unaroused. Each year they buy a few hundred thousand picture windows, seed a few hundred thousand lawns."¹ Indeed, "for millions of suburbanites, their post-World War II experience has been prosperous and open far beyond their depression-born expectations. For them, the suburbs have been one vast supermarket, abundantly and conveniently stocked with approved, yet often variegated, choices."²

Just when the battle against the twin dangers of sprawl and scatteration appeared hopeless, the planner found new allies (apparently stronger than all others) in the New Community and the new community developer.

I. THE NEW COMMUNITY

With a seeming burst of enthusiasm, *House and Home Magazine* informed its readers that "across the United States there are at least 75 completely planned communities of 1,000 or more acres where developers are creating facilities to house more than 6 million people . . . All this is hard to grasp since most of these new towns differ radically from the kinds of communities that most housing community people have created in the past."³

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1. VERNON, *THE MYTHS AND REALITY OF OUR URBAN PROBLEM* 1 (1962).

2. RIESMAN, *METROPOLIS: VALUES IN CONFLICT* 71 (1964).

3. *New Towns for America*, *House and Home*, Feb. 1964, p. 123.

Newsweek rather idyllically asked its readers to picture a town where children walking to school need never cross a street, where homes and apartment houses overlook a park or lake, where unsightly telephone wires and television antennas lie deep under ground. A Utopian model at a world's fair pavilion? the magazine asked. And it answered: not at all. At least twenty⁴ such communities offering most of these features are now being built from Virginia to California.⁵ Still another writer has said:

the new community as we are beginning to visualize it, offers a solution to many of the most pressing problems in our environment in happy interacting combination. In answer to urban sprawl and the shortage of land—not in the country at large but in easily accessible desirable places—it offers concentration It thus gives people the sense of identity, of sharing that is lucky in the anonymous vastness of our cities and suburbs.⁶

To facilitate the private initiation of these three-dimensional panaceas, thus impeding "sprawling, space-consuming, unplanned and uneconomic" development, the federal government recommended in 1964 a program whereby the Federal Housing Administration would insure loans made to developers for land acquisition and development needs. Apparently Congress did not reflect the "winds of change" blowing in the nation, for the proposals relative to New Communities died in committee. Expectations are that the same bill will be submitted again and this time meet a happier fate. The privately-developed New Community is to become a weapon in the battle to achieve the Great Society.

II. THE PRIVATE DEVELOPER—EVERY PLAYER HAS A NUMBER

A. General Description

Differences exist among New Community developers which affect organizational structure, operational processes, funding of development needs, perceptions of future role in the development of other communities and method of land acquisition. Yet there is at least one characteristic generic to all the developers. Although some would attach more emphasis to it than others, they would all agree that making money is one of their prime motives. Whether this urge is expressed in terms of a cash flow position

4. *Newsweek* was quite modest in its enumeration. Over one hundred so-called "New Communities" are presently in the planning or development stage in the United States. Generally, in terms of the developer's goals, a New Community can be defined as a planned development on many thousand acres, incorporating a hoped-for complement of residential units, industry, and commercial establishments.

5. *New Communities*, *Newsweek*, Nov. 23, 1964, p. 112.

6. Von Eckardt, *Could This Be Our New Town?*, *New Republic*, Nov. 7, 1964, p. 21.

or an ultimate profit yield (or both) depends on the corporate or personal state of the developer concerning such complex items as the holding costs of the land, market perceptions, and over-all tax situations.

Most developers seek to confine their activities to acquiring the land, planning the community and then pre-servicing the land with water, sewer, and other public facilities. They are not true community builders, and they hope, in effect, to market furnished lots to builders. Expectations are that the primary source of profit⁷ will emanate from land appreciation accruing to the development because of its planned community image and the availability of community services. Additionally, they see the builder as willing to pay a premium to be buffered from local political pressures.

Whether done on intuition or by analytical process, almost every developer to some extent has made a reading of the nation's increasing affluence, and of the increase in disposable income and leisure time available to most consumers. These socio-economic factors are reflected in the amount of amenity usually included as part of the New Community package. "Color it green" is a virtual admonition of all developers to their planners. To the reflections of the developers, the planners have added their concerns about imageability, defined geographical edges, balances and housing mix. When the concerns of the planner are felt to be reflected positively in the market place, the developer articulates the best the planner has to offer—often in more understandable language.

B. *Types of Developers*

Most New Community developers fall into two major classifications. The expansionists see themselves as able (and willing) to initiate several New Communities (and other real estate developments) at one time and are indeed contemplating continuous replication of New Community projects. Conversely, the non-expansionists do not appear to be looking beyond their current activities.⁸

7. Almost all of the developers express an intention to hold on to certain investment properties. For example, most will lease or rent commercial space and multi-family units.

8. Perhaps another way to classify the developers relates to their method of land acquisition. There are two distinct classifications: developers who are operating on land which they have owned for a long period of time and developers operating on recently-purchased land. Each of these categories symbolizes different funding needs, different development strategies and different cash flow problems. Both categories may be utilized to describe further the expansionists and non-expansionists today.

1. *Expansionists*

Sunset International Petroleum Company⁹ and Janss Corporation¹⁰ perhaps most readily characterize the expansionist class. These companies perceive themselves as having developed sufficient expertise to operate in a wide number of development areas. Indeed, both have developed skill in funding land acquisition and development needs. Although consultants are called in from time to time, necessary market and planning studies are most often prepared in shop by their own personnel. Both are experimenting with the computer as an aid to decision making.

2. *Non-Expansionists*

The non-expansionists have gained most of the favorable national publicity relative to the development of new communities across the country. Like their compatriots the expansionists, they operate on either newly acquired land or land owned or controlled by them for some time. Their style of operating is generally much more personal than that of the expansionists and decisions more often than not are made on a more intuitive and subjective basis. Highly paid and well known economic and planning consultants are used more frequently, thus reducing the need for staff.

Among the non-expansionists, some have entered into the New Community arena with the zeal of a missionary, determined to bring to Americans a better way of life—a way of life they seem willing to define with some certitude. These developers appear much more willing than others to experiment with both design and social infrastructure. Two of the leading missionaries are Robert Simon, developer of Reston, just south of Washington, D. C., and Jim Rouse, developer of Columbia, just south of Baltimore, Maryland. Simon sees the community as providing people with an area where they “should be able to do the things they enjoy, near where they live.” He adds that “Reston will provide many Americans . . . the stability of belonging to one community for a lifetime. They are tired of rootlessness.”¹¹ According to one commentator, residents of Reston will have little need to move from the city. “Simon’s town will provide a home for every phase of the cycle, without once moving out of the magic circle of Reston. It will eliminate the need for forming four or five sets of friends during a

9. Sunset’s major operation in the New Community area is in Sacramento-Sunset City. The company purchased an option to the 12,000 acre site in 1960 and exercised this option in 1961.

10. Janss’s major new community endeavor is at Conejo, forty miles northwest of Los Angeles. The land (8,000 acres) has been controlled by the Janss Company for many years.

11. *The Reston, Virginia Story*, Washington World, Aug. 17, 1964, p. 8.

lifetime and offer, along the way, the marvelous mixture of wisdom and nonsense, of grave responsibility and youthful hijinks present in every small community."¹² Rouse is far less a physical determinist than Simon. Thus Rouse has been far less pedantic and self-conscious about his planning or his debt to urban design and architecture. Instead he has concentrated more on the very tenuous relationship between physical and social planning. His community, by providing people with a better environment (better defined in terms of both social services and physical amenity) and improved communication linkages (accessibility of ideas, people, and goods) will be a "garden for people, God-centered" and an environment hopefully replete with love.

Other than the missionaries, two other breeds of non-expansionist developers exist—the entrepreneurs¹³ and the land lovers.¹⁴ Like the missionaries, both articulate the fact that their New Community will lead to the "new way of life."

Although the missionaries have come to believe their own speeches, the entrepreneurs treat the new community primarily as a marketable product. Indeed, their commitment to a "new way of life" parallels quite closely their view of what will sell and is not generally the result of any prior normative commitment to an overview of society. Conversely, the land lovers see the new community primarily as a means of preserving the values imputed to be inherent in the land itself—values often connected with a lengthy period of prior ownership and threatened by the rush of urbanization.

III. THE DEVELOPERS' VIEW OF PLANNING

The degree to which most New Community developers have manifested a narcissus complex in their relationship to planning is striking. The almost unanimous willingness on the part of private entrepreneurs to identify with the "benefits" of a planned community emanates in part from their perceptions of the market, of human behavior, and of political structure. Additionally, the developers, through the process of osmosis, accepted the "environmental truths" handed down by professional planners and others relative to the need for open space, balance, mix, order, etc. This acceptance was premised on perceived psychic and material benefits in marketing the planners' paradigm.

12. *Id.* at 27.

13. A good example of the entrepreneur would be Allan Lindsey, developer of El Dorado Hills, north of Sacramento, California.

14. A proposed New Community is being developed on the Irvine Ranch near Los Angeles by the Irvine Company. This property has been owned by the Irvine family for a great many years. In essence, the land has become an extension of their personality.

A. *The Plan as a Philosophy*

The beginning of a plan for a New Community must be a philosophy and not topography—not existing zoning and other ordinances of the community, not public financial regulations or other factors dealing with the money market.¹⁵

To a greater extent than the other types of developers discussed earlier, the missionaries and the land lovers treat their project as an extension of their own personalities and philosophy of life. Simon, nurtured on the values of English New Towns, exposed to the philosophy of individuals like Mumford and Stein, views a community's physical environment as playing a very important role in the formation of human as well as group personalities. Reston is an expression of Simon's philosophy relative to the importance of the community as a physical envelope. Rouse also is quite articulate when expressing his personal philosophy relative to the meaning of community.

Personally, I hold some . . . conclusions to the effect that people grow best in small communities where the institutions which are the dominant forces in their lives are within the scale of their comprehension and within reach of their sense of responsibility and capacity to manage.¹⁶

Because Rouse and Simon, despite corporate trimmings, are the moving force in their respective projects, their objectives will provide a ready framework for the planners—especially those planners historically fed by the logical positivist.

Similarly, developers of the Irvine Ranch have a predetermined philosophy relative to the inputs into the planning process. Unlike Rouse and Simon, the content of the input reflects not a physical determinism or a self-conscious attempt to relate social and physical planning, but a "feeling" for the land. The result in its effect on the planning process, however, is the same. In essence, the developer's philosophy is fed into the planners' stream of consciousness.

B. *The Plan as a Reaction Against Environmental Criticism*

Developers are not unaware of the continuous stream of criticism leveled at the emerging physical pattern resulting from the urbanization process. When the New Community was posited by the planners as an alternative to "sprawl" and "slurb," the developer was at least receptive. When the alternative was perceived to be a competitive package—competitive in terms

15. Address by Robert Simon, Developer of Reston, Virginia, to the Anglo-American Seminar on the Planning of Urban Regions, Oxfordshire, England, July 1964.

16. Interview with Jim Rouse, April 1964.

of creating dissatisfaction among households in existing units and as a magnet drawing in-migrants away from older or other new units—then the developers' initial receptivity changed to enthusiasm. Profits and doing good became synonymous. The developer and the planner spoke the same language.

C. *The Plan as a Reflection of the Market*

While society at large may judge a developer a success or failure on the basis of a benefit-cost equation which includes physical as well as socio-economic criteria, success to the developer is measured primarily in terms of his ability both to maximize and optimize income. Given present institutional and market factors, a developer's fate is measured more by return on equity and cash flow than by the degree of social inputs or physical amenity included in the plan. That many developers are inclined to link potential profits with the marketability of a new way of life must be attributed to their reading, whether right or wrong, of America's affluence and changing pattern of living.

Basically, the New Community developer has received the same stimuli which caused larger builders in the late 1950's to reorient their production from moderately priced to higher priced housing. In addition to the almost unanimous feeling that the market for lower priced houses was and is thin, most developers have acted on the assumption (sometimes conscious, other times sub-conscious) that early sales to lower income households impede efforts to sell units to higher income households. Moreover, a heavy initial increment of lower priced houses is thought to hinder establishment of a proper fiscal base necessary to support development of community wide services. Whether these perceptions are true is not relevant. What is important is the fact that community developers base their decisions on the assumption that they are true. Thus, few new communities currently being planned and programmed will include housing priced at less than \$20,000. Furthermore, most community plans reflect in their land use allocations and internal design a concentration on the felt needs of the more affluent members of society.

To the developer, the plan offers an additional and useful means to assure (and insure) consumers that their investment will be protected and that they will be able in time to "trade up" on equity—a very important factor attendant on the purchase of a home in a New Community. The plan reduces environmental uncertainty or, more aptly, offers environmental protection. Thus it serves as an effective Miltown pill to anxious buyers worried about the future of their investment. In effect, they will be able to play the Great American game called "house appreciation" or "moving up in the ranks."

For much the same psychic reasons the plan plays a crucial role in attracting investors. To the investor, like the consumer, the plan represents a developer's reflection of the market and his proposed strategy to capture that market. Although the investor may (or may not) be more sanguine than the consumer in measuring the developer's ability to implement the plan, the plan at least offers the investor a product and a measuring rod.

D. The Plan as a Political Instrument

Most developers feel that preparation of a long range plan is imperative in localities where the political powers are either unfriendly or where the political winds of change blow frequently. The plan once agreed upon by both contestants—developer and politician—provides the developer with a definitive road map. In the developer's view, the plan protects the project from meddling political gamesmen.

Where public officials are more receptive to the projected New Community, the plan serves a different political function. Here the developer and the local officials jointly use the plan as a means of boosting the attributes of the area. Both hope the new development will be a container of industry and homebuyers (particularly those homebuyers who are rich). In those cases, growthmanship suits the needs of developer and politician alike.

Preparation of a plan may become crucial if the developer contemplates using any federal programs in a privately developed New Community, for attached to almost all federal programs is a comprehensive planning requirement. Although most non-urbanized counties do not meet federal planning requirements, it is quite possible that the developer's plan may prove a ready substitute once it is approved by the public agency.

IV. TYPE OF PLAN AND PLANNING PROCESS

Despite each developer's announced intention to produce a different environmental package from what already exists, and to produce the only real New Community in America, there is a surprising sameness about the general physical plans which have been prepared by most New Community planners. Most communities are generally divided into three elements: neighborhoods, villages, and town centers (the exact nomenclature attached to the various community subdivisions may change from community to community, but the principles are the same). Villages are oriented around a central area supposedly programmed to meet the needs of residents for impulse and durable goods, as well as to supply any need for vicarious urban pleasures. There is a hierarchy of physical components, each representing a different order of social activities.

Each order of physical unit from neighborhood to town center will have commercial, educational, and recreational facilities commensurate with the proposed population and its ultimate needs. Surrounding each village will be open space; surrounding each community will hopefully be some kind of a buffer either in the form of a greenbelt, or an arterial system. Balance, self-sufficiency, and housing mix are all part of the lexicon found in New Community plans. Housing mix usually refers to a variety of housing types and to some variation in the price range. Balance and self-sufficiency are often defined in terms of land set aside for the hopeful arrival of (clean) industry and for the development of recreational as well as various commercial facilities. People will then be able to live, work, and play in the community.

Each community is rather self-conscious about the amount of recreational facilities and "open space" included within its confines. Parks, trees, golf courses, swimming pools, bridle paths and "restful play space" are all important means toward achieving the new way of life and the sale of houses.

A developer's personality, his philosophy (or lack of one) relative to the ideal community, his view of the market and his perception of the local political scene will determine the extent to which he will "buy" the services of the planner and his over-all approach to planning. When these elements are in internal conflict or do not accurately mirror external realities, the final plan may not only reflect schizoid tendencies but limit the viable alternatives open to the developer. Additionally, when the developer's perceptions of the market are inaccurate, an inability to react quickly may be fatal. Yet a lengthy reaction time may be forced on the developer because of the political necessity to have a defined plan. Those who view the market as a buyer's market and see the plan as a merchandising tool will probably prepare quite definitive long range plans.¹⁷ Also, the need to "lock in" the community to protect it from political interference will lead a developer to prepare a precise plan.

To date, most New Community plans have been of the precise type; in these cases the planning is neat, rational, logical, and fixed. The range of alternatives open is quite limited. Implicit in this approach is the treatment of the New Community as an end product, with an initial development year and a terminal point. That the community will change, will develop,

17. As indicated earlier, the land lovers and the missionaries see the community as an extension of their own personalities and their own philosophies. They have a tendency to view the community more as an identifiable product—one that is easily translated into two-dimensional form. Thus they would be quite likely, completely apart from market or political factors, to seek translation of concepts into definitive plans.

will redevelop after "1980" is acknowledged by the planners, but often denied by the plan. Every area is planned, with little flexibility provided in the design for unforeseen events. Obsolescence—either planned or unplanned—is not a considered input.

In juxtaposition to the type of planning described above is the non-planned community. Here the developer apparently is more concerned with being able to react quickly to changes in the market than with the need for potential protection from less than understanding politicians. No matter what the market conditions, he prefers flexibility in future actions over a plan which might limit alternatives because of public or resident acceptance. To this type of developer, the plan represents a salt shaker, and land uses, the contents. These uses may be shifted around or "shaken up" almost at will depending on the initial reaction of the market.¹⁸ In most of these communities, land values replace land use as the primary input into the planning process. Precise general plans for the entire community are scrupulously avoided, replaced by plans showing only enough detail to carry the developer through the initial development years.

V. RELEVANCE OF THE NEW COMMUNITY

Is the New Community a way toward a brighter tomorrow, deserved of replication across the landscape? Or is it merely a historical anachronism, pleasant and nice, but socially, economically, and physically irrelevant? By present standards of community planning, most of the privately initiated projects win high applause, and if implemented, they will be aesthetically pleasing both to the resident and to the visitor. Yet the platitudes currently being received by the private developer must be tempered by knowledge that the communities presently being planned will house primarily upper income, white Americans.¹⁹ These citizens are perhaps least concerned with the "self-contained," "balanced," geographically biased concepts implicit (if not explicit) in all the New Communities.

Increased affluence and technological advances have widened the work, play and living choices of the majority of Americans. Spatial boundaries

18. This type of planning may make it more difficult to sell a community to potential homebuyers. Uncertainty is increased if the homebuyer cannot see his neighbors as well as the relation of his neighborhood to other neighborhoods and other land uses on the plan.

19. This is stated primarily as a fact and not as criticism. Most developers are correct in their readings of the market. The judgment that the market for lower priced housing is thin in fringe areas seems correct. This is primarily due to the lack of jobs in the suburbs, and the availability of adequate housing in older areas. Given our present institutional framework, the developer cannot be held responsible for cases of extreme poverty.

no longer serve as effective barriers limiting communication or circumscribing the range of one's interests. While the appellation "Jet Set" may still only fit a limited few, the term is quite symbolic of the growing irrelevance of space or place in defining community. Perhaps a new definition of community is needed, one that concentrates on non-spatial, non-place elements.²⁰ In effect, the frequency, duration, and intensity of communication linkages between and among people would replace the more traditional metes and bounds definition. Each individual, able because of income or intellect to play the non-place game, would have a hierarchy of communities at his disposal.

This paradigm does not reflect the way of life for the "have nots" in society, but for the majority it is quite an accurate picture. It is just this majority which will be the supposed beneficiaries of the new way of life created within and by the New Community. Primarily because of their locational freedom and diversity of linkages, they will have a low order of shared interests within their new place of residence. Most will be members of other more viable communities, not geographically located within the confines of Utopia, U.S.A.

The import of the local community will differ, of course, depending on the individual household and the members of that household. No doubt women with small children are locationally bound, but even here the extent of community linkages is usually defined in terms of morning coffee and a baby-sitting pool. Nobody is inclined to take in another's washing—at least not for too long.²¹

Neither the developer nor the planner is content with the increasing choices open to consumers of housing space. The spatial emancipation of human beings is frowned upon, and terms like balance and self-sufficiency are posited as an ideal. The developer is more pragmatic than the planner. While the planner holds on to his English New Town legacy, most developers interpret "balance" as meaning any amount of industry which can be cajoled into the area, and self-sufficiency as meaning fiscal insulation and a proper tax base. Even those New Community plans which define balance as "a number of jobs equal to the resident labor forces" do not project every resident as working in the New Community. Thus, a flow pattern will continue to exist between and among communities. The journey to work will not be abolished and the freeways will still be useful.

20. Webber, *Explorations into Urban Structure*, in *THE URBAN PLACE AND THE NONPLACE URBAN REALM* 79 (1964).

21. The elementary school has no doubt provided a focus for strong "community" linkages. But even here changes in the educational system related to social pressures (civil rights) and educational innovation (team teaching, educational complexes) may make location of the elementary schools less subject to specific geographical criteria.

What of the place people—those whose choices are restricted because of low income, color, or subculture and who will not be found in great numbers in the New Community? Given the place orientation of these citizens, even marginal efforts to improve their physical environment might have a much more meaningful effect than such activities will have on the more affluent. For the affluent, the residence-community nexus is but one among many; for the poor, it is the primary one. Additionally, for the affluent the way of life purchaseable in the New Community cannot be too significantly different from what they had before.

Perhaps the most common and more cogent defense of New Communities lies in positing such developments as an alternative to urban sprawl, scatteration, and slurb. Here the rationale rests on some “best urban form,” although to argue the best physical form for a metropolitan area involves us in a never-ending debate over benefits and costs. The debate often degenerates into subjective evaluation and meaningless shibboleths. “Neither scatter nor compaction are wholly a hero or villain, but each may have its place in a different scheme of values.”²² Although sprawl may result in greater public costs for public facilities, it does provide a needed flexibility in meeting future development and redevelopment needs. Space is left internal to metropolitan complexes and each area is developed over a differentiated time period. As contrasted with the New Community, sprawl provides lower income families an opportunity to play the game of choice relative to the environment.

In many respects, the land use ingredients in these New Communities will not be too different from the ingredients found in “non-planned” communities built during the last decade. During the 1950’s, for example, dispersal of industry into privately- or publicly-sponsored industrial parks gave suburbia a job base. Locational freedom provided by freeways made the journey to work palatable, linking places of residence and place of work together quite compatibly. New markets brought shopping centers and services to the suburb. Thus, through the independent decisions of many builders, industrial developers, shopping center developers, local governments, and the consumer, new suburban “communities” come into being. Although planners and academicians may not judge the result as meritorious, it worked.

Certainly the New Community offers a better micro-environment, a better mix of environmental ingredients and a locational arrangement for that mix which reduces accessibility costs to residents. However, the real test of these New Communities is whether they facilitate or impede choices. The com-

22. Lessinger, *The Case for Scatteration*, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Aug. 1962, p. 159.

munity must not only serve as a resting place for those individuals seeking to escape from the freedom available in the market place, but more significantly the community must serve as a take-off point, a launching pad permitting residents to enter the non-place hierarchy of communities.

VI. THE NEW COMMUNITY AND THE PLANNER

Given the social, economic, and physical ambiguities inherent in the New Communities, it is surprising to witness the almost unanimous unquestioned approval granted these developments by planners and the rapid migration of planners from public to private employment. This tendency is odd in a profession that has been described as "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."²³

To many planners, fortunately, the challenge of the city is meat and drink, but others, appalled at the chronic disorder of it, have turned their eyes outward and dreamed of starting afresh with new regional towns. These, the hope goes, would be more severed from the city than today's suburbia; clean and manageable, each would have an optimum balance of activities, would be nourished by its own industry and have an amateur culture of symphony orchestras, art schools and little theatres, all its own.²⁴

That the city planner should look with "green" eyes at the current crop of New Communities is on close reflection quite understandable. More than other professions, the planner has been pre-conditioned by two long-standing beliefs: the first in physical determinism,²⁵ the second in the relevance of the general plan. Both are out of tune with the complexities of city life, but both lend themselves quite well to the New Community.

A. *Physical Determinism*

Historically, the planning profession has been dominated by the designers, architects, and engineers. From the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, our history by choice is one of non-involvement in the politics of a city. Our philosophy is steeped in an errant logical positivism, our marching orders have been city beautiful, city practical, city economic, and only recently

23. RIESMAN, *THE LONELY CROWD* 348 (1953).

24. WHYTE, *THE EXPLODING METROPOLIS* xii (1958).

25. The planner is in the rather unique position of first denying and then affirming a role. As a physical determinist, he is in this game to improve peoples' lives through improvements in the physical environment. When asked *which* people, he will submit, perhaps reflecting the influence of the logical positivist, that this is not his problem to decide. Some planners would argue that planning is "good in and of itself," and has little affected resource allocation or the distribution of benefits and costs.

city social. Planners have seen the city through the eyes of a nominalist as a collection of neat functions, prescribed by rigid physical dimensions. They have concentrated too long on urban forms as an abstraction rather than on the relation of urban form to the lives not of a homogenous population but of a heterogeneous population which includes the Negro, the single person, the aged, the divorced, and the widowed.

Many planners still hold fast to the doctrine that there is a definite and provable correlation between the physical environment and social pathologies. That there is *not* an easily defined relationship between the physical environment and human behavior is now quite apparent.

The simple one to one cause and effect links that once tied houses and neighborhoods to behavior are coming to be seen as but strands in highly complex webs that, in turn, are shaped by the intricate and subtle relations that mark social, physical, economic, and political systems and their associated behavior. The simple clarity of the city planning profession's role in this is thus being dimmed through clouds of complexities, diversity²⁶

B. *The General Plan*

The planner oftentimes solves all the big problems while ignoring the small ones. As a result, the planner's relationship with the city often ends in alienation. The city looks for a stronger, more helpful ally, while the planner continues his search for a more fertile hunting ground—where he can practice global decision-making.

Although this analysis may sound too fatalistic, it does reflect the growing ineffectiveness of city planners in large urban areas. Existing cities will play a vital role in serving "the rest of society at present and for the immediate future as a combination Ellis Island and training school for the receipt, training and ultimate transshipment to the suburbs of underprivileged immigrants."²⁷ Implicit in a view of the city as a place where acculturation takes place is a commitment to view the city not as an abstraction, but as people, different people who must for the time being play out their lives (or their game) inside its narrow confines.

Given the planner's latent heritage of physical determinism and his philosophical acquiescence in logical positivism, he is uniquely at a disadvantage in playing the city game. In a dynamic, mobile urban society, where politics is at best incremental and serves as a safety valve for the strivings of different

26. Webber, *Looking Toward an American Institute of Planning Consensus on Professional Goals* 2, Draft Paper for American Institute of Planners, Washington, D.C., May 16, 1963.

27. Bebout & Bredemeier, *American Cities as Social Systems*, Journal of the American Institute of Planners, May 1963, p. 68.

groups, the long range general plan positing a comprehensive goal system and emphasizing physical form in terms of defined edges and neat internal areas serves only as a salutary device at budget time. Conceptually, the long range planning approach is impossible for it cannot be "practiced except for relatively simple problems and even then only in somewhat modified form. It assumes intellectual capacities and sources of information that men simply do not possess and it is even more absurd as an approach to policy when the time and money that can be allocated to a policy problem is limited, as is always the case."²⁸ Moreover, in order to reach a consensus (the main thrust of the long range plan as a political tool), goals must be reduced to a community-wide and jointly shared value base. Those sharing, however, are the most articulate and powerful, often not the growing minority of city residents (the poor, the Negro). The acceptance by the planner of a somewhat organismic concept of a community, one in which really only middle class values are acceptable, negates his very effectiveness in the process of decision-making. To the disadvantaged, the immediate present and not the distant future is most relevant. Conflict is essential if they are to participate in the distribution of society's benefits. The long range plan often mutes the complexities of city life, impedes a realistic view of a city's problems (its peoples' problems) and provides little in the way of help for decision-makers.

Unable to understand the functions of cities or of the people within them, planners have always responded favorably to the Garden City and New Town idea. Not only are these alternatives physically oriented, but they are premised on the belief that a good environment will produce good people. Additionally, since there are often no people on the site and the landscape is left untouched, the general plan approach may work. The planner is again useful and his view of life brightens.

VII. SOME ALTERNATIVE ROLES FOR THE FUTURE

The almost universal applause granted New Communities by the planner is an outgrowth of the historical evolution of the profession and its subscription to the general plan approach. That New Communities will result in a prettier landscape is accepted almost as a truism; that they are in tune with economic and social trends in this nation is open to debate. It behooves the planner to participate in that debate if his profession is to remain a vital one. Whatever the outcome, however, the planner needs to redefine this role if he is to make a contribution towards improving the lot of his fellow men.

28. Lindblom, *The Sciences of Muddling Through*, *Public Administration Review*, Spring 1959, pp. 79, 80.

Perhaps the physical environment in macro-scale may not play as significant a part in promoting human welfare as was once thought. Beauty and amenity are values, but they are quite subjective values. Urbanization will continue, and should be accelerated in order to facilitate the distribution of benefits to lower income households. Debate over urban form and urban structure should be relegated to the classroom (and competing computers). "We should not engage in pep talk slogans like save the city or clean up the slums. I care very little about the city as a physical element and I don't hate the slums, per se. I want to know what is wrong with our economy, our education, our health services, our counseling, our housing programs, our transportation, and what we can do about it to expand opportunity in both the city and the suburbs."²⁹

In the non-place world, the affluent treat the old concept of community quite carelessly. People and establishments are constantly breaking through the paper confines placed on them by planners and sociologists. Conversely, because of the general plan concept and approach, those people who are place-oriented receive the fewest benefits from planning, and are often harmed because of the planners' broad brush strokes.

If this analysis is correct, it suggests that planners should re-focus their attention away from the whole, the general, the corporate and the communal aspects of the city. Emphasis should be on planning as a resource-allocation process and criteria should be prepared to assist in the dispersion of public goods and the direction of private growth. Equal treatment in terms of time or expenditures will not be available to all areas of the urban complex. Problem areas must be identified by the planner, and a choice of alternatives must be presented to the community.

The prime objective of the planner will be "to seek to induce those patterns that will maximize the accessibility of the cities' residents to the broad range of opportunities for interaction that advanced civilization opens to them."³⁰ Three special areas will demand this attention: (1) the reduction of the friction cost—the communication costs—for the non-place citizen, (2) the improvement of the physical environment for place people—the disadvantaged, and (3) the planning of micro-spaces as a psychic commodity.

In terms of reducing friction costs, the planner will concern himself primarily with facilitating the movement of people, goods, and ideas. With respect to the place people (the poor), planners will concern themselves with the type and level of marginal physical improvements necessary to

29. See comments by Eichler in *Segregation, Subsidies, and Megalopolis*, An Occasional Paper on the City, No. 1, 1964, p. 19.

30. Webber, *op. cit. supra* note 26, at 3.

enhance the viability of their areas as take off points, and as reflectors of positive personal and community images. Finally, intimate space is important to both the place and non-place people. For the place people, proper environmental space may mean the difference between total alienation and personal and community integration. For the non-place people, space represents a "resting place" from participation in the hierarchy of communities outside the residence community. It also represents a place where he can escape from the freedom of his everyday world from time to time. Planners know little about the effect of micro-space and structure on either the human or group personality. Yet in terms of the way man plays out his game, the small world may be more important than the larger one.

Departure from the general plan concept and acceptance of the approach to planning defined in this article suggest a much closer relationship between physical and social planning. While there is not a one-to-one ratio relative to the effect the physical environment has on social behavior, complex cause and effect relationships do exist.

Social planning can make a significant contribution to the welfare of urban residents by the careful analyses of the impact of physical changes on human beings. If planning for the physical environment is thought of as instrumental to the achievement of social ends, then the artificial barriers created by nomenclature such as "social" and "physical" will be broken.

It is foolish to argue that physical planners have a role which frees them from concern as professionals with difficulties facing society, such as poverty, social disorganization and the like. Despite an aggregate affluence, decisions made within our political and institutional framework are guided by an economics premised on scarcity. Every physical input into the environment represents an allocation of resources. Goods and services dispersed in one area, may not be spent in other areas. Additionally, while planners may have only a limited chance to "do good," they do, through ill-conceived recommendations, have an opportunity to do tremendous harm to the ecology of people and environment. How New Communities are implemented by planners and developers will thus have a critical impact on the allocation of environmental resources in improving the welfare of our urban communities.

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