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Stephen L. Elkin

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Control of the use of land is a major problem in all large cities. In both developed and developing nations, local and central authorities have tried in a variety of ways to shape the physical layout of their cities and metropolitan areas in the realization that how land is used has profound consequences for the well-being of their citizens. From what is already known about such attempts, most of which draws on American practice, it would seem that efforts to control land use, roughly, to plan, are intimately bound up with the way in which politics is carried on within the cities and metropolitan areas and at higher levels of government.<sup>1</sup> The intricate and close relationship between politics and planning at any level should now be a commonplace, but at the least it is clear that many implications of this, generally reluctant, marriage have not been analyzed.

Some studies of politics and planning have concentrated on the recalcitrance of non-planners, and particularly of elected officials, when faced with planning proposals. In others the concern has been to demonstrate how politics, by which is usually meant bargaining and competition between elected representatives, has penetrated into the planning process. The typical argument in both kinds of studies has been the tenacity and imperialism of existing political patterns and the comparative weakness of planning.<sup>2</sup> The starting point in these analyses, sometimes unstated or unexplored, is the incompatibility of the logic of planning with the logic of the political arrangements in which planning seeks to operate, the difference largely being one of public policy as a product of conscious choice of ends and means versus public policy as an aggregation of a variety of interests and viewpoints.<sup>3</sup>

Planning and politics in London present a different picture. Accepting

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Oliver Williams, *Metropolitan Political Analysis* (New York, 1971); Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield, *Politics, Planning and the Public Interest* (New York, 1955); Alan Altshuler, *The City Planning Process* (Ithaca, 1966); David C. Ranney, *Planning and Politics in the Metropolis* (Columbus, 1969); and Francine Rabinowitz, *City Politics and Planning* (New York, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> For studies dealing with planning in other than a land use context and which are concerned with the impact of politics, see the following. Stephen S. Cohen, *Modern Capitalist Planning: The French Model* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); Andrew Shonfield, *Modern Capitalism* (London, 1965); Aaron Wildavsky, *The Politics of the Budgetary Process* (Boston, 1964); and Charles L. Schultze, *The Politics and Economics of Public Spending* (Washington D.C., 1968).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Altshuler, *City Planning* and Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics*.

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the logical tension between the two, there are still empirical variations, particularly in the extent of the imperialism and tenacity of politics. Thus, land use planning in London provides an opportunity to explore the potential of planning when political patterns do not present a serious impediment to the definition of community purposes and the selection of means to serve them. Most generally of interest is an explanation of the insulation of the planning authority and an examination of the consequences which flow from this situation. The former indicates one central concern of this study: why is it that decisions which had high impact in terms of residential and commercial patterns, decisions which one might think affected some of the central values of the citizenry, were treated by London citizens and public officials alike as if there was little doubt *who* should make the decisions, *how* they should be made and in a general fashion, *what* the decisions should be. The implications of the latter will be considered below.

## POLITICS

The insulation of the planning authority, and the attendant low visibility of planning decisions, is illustrated by two major land use projects. Whereas in large American cities such decisions are among the most controversial, if not *the* most controversial, the examples suggest that this was not the case in London. Even decisions having considerable impact on land use patterns generated limited involvement and controversy by American standards.

In a study of property development in England, concentrating mostly on London, Oliver Marriott describes at length the development of a site which has come to be known as Euston Centre. The development according to Marriott, is worth more than 100 million dollars, covers an area of approximately 13 acres, and contains about 100 shops, 160,000 sq. feet of show-rooms, a factory, luxury flats, a garage for 900 cars, and two office towers of 17 and 34 stories, high blocks by London standards. The only newspaper to pick up the story of the development did so when the project *was already under way*, when it noted that the London County Council was building an underpass adjacent to the site 'but there is nothing to show that the area is being transformed into what amounts to a miniature new town'.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that one of the largest developments of any sort in London was discussed and decided upon by the local planning authority without any public discussion.

The second example concerns a proposal for a housing development by a public authority. In 1964, Islington Borough Council<sup>2</sup> sought planning permission from the LCC, the planning authority for the area, to clear an

<sup>1</sup> The *Evening Standard*, quoted in Oliver Marriott, *The Property Boom* (London, 1967), p. 165. The original statement appears in capital letters.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the London boroughs see Chapter 2.

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old privately-built housing estate and replace it with public authority flats. After informal consultations with LCC planning officers, who agreed that some action needed to be taken, an application for the building of the flats was submitted. For various reasons not relevant to the present discussion, the Town Planning Committee of the County Council did not act on the application within the period designated by law, and the borough lodged an appeal based on what under the law could be interpreted as a refusal. Until some time after the application for permission was submitted by the Borough Council, there was no publicity for the project. Residents on the site and those living in the surrounding area were unaware of the proposal to redevelop and of the consultations. They only gained knowledge of these matters when the borough discovered it required permission from the owners of a protected London square, which was part of the proposed site, if they wished to build on it. One of the owners passed on the information to a resident of the area. In short it was possible for the planning authority to consider an application for a public housing project and to negotiate with the public authority planning to build it without any of the area residents being aware of it.

Contrary to expectations engendered by a study of American urban politics then, governmental decisions in London were discussed and made largely by public officials. Citizens and their spokesmen played a comparatively limited role and knowledge of local affairs was not widely dispersed. The explanation of this state of affairs principally resolves itself into an analysis of two problems. First, we need to delineate the characteristics of political cleavages in London as compared to those in large American cities, particularly their comparatively limited extent in the former. We then need to trace the roots of the London pattern and indicate some of the consequences for the behavior of public officials. Secondly, the low level of interest group behavior in London as compared to large American cities must be described and the factors associated with this situation and its results isolated.

As already implied, one major consequence of the factors just touched on was the autonomy of public officials, especially elected representatives. This had other roots, particularly the norms and values held by them; similarly, the legislative role of representatives influenced the extent of autonomy. The last two and variables clustered around them were associated with another salient characteristic of the LCC, viz. the dominance of an analytical mode of organizational coordination.<sup>1</sup>

The defining characteristic of this mode is the assumption held by organization members of shared objectives which can be used to guide decision-making. In the case of the LCC the manifestations of analytical coordination were the delegation of effective authority by most elected

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of analytical versus political processes in James March and Herbert Simon, *Organizations* (New York, 1958), p. 130.

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officials to a small group of their number and to some of their nominal subordinates, viz. local government officers, and the deliberative process pursued by the latter two.

Clues as to how the discrete problems just discussed can be brought together are provided by a strand in the theory of organizational behavior which is concerned with the impact of an organization's environment on its internal processes and structure. Although this work has focused almost entirely on either business organizations or public bureaucracies, not on representative bodies, and it has been largely concerned with organizations as a whole rather than the members that compose them, some of the concepts developed are useful for present purposes. Particularly, the focus on the level of certainty of the environment and the impact of this property on the concentration of influence within the organization is of importance.<sup>1</sup>

In London, the high level of certainty in the political environment of elected representatives is the explanatory variable around which much of the analysis revolves. Similarly, in the discussion of large American cities presented here, it is the low level of certainty which is crucial. For our purposes, the political environment of elected representatives is that aspect of their total environment which is relevant for purposes of getting and staying elected, i.e. the citizenry of the LCC and particularly their own constituents.<sup>2</sup> The level of environmental certainty can be defined as a product of two principal elements, variability and predictability.<sup>3</sup> Environments may then be variable but certain because of high predictability. Or they may be certain even though little information is held or available because their behavior varies little.<sup>4</sup>

Certainty in the political environment of elected representatives refers to variability and predictability in the content and intensity of demands

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, William Dill, 'Environment as an Influence on Managerial Autonomy', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 3 (1962), 409-33; John Child, 'Towards a Theory of Organization, Environment and Performance of Work Organizations', London Graduate School of Business, March 1970; Richard Norman, 'Organization, Mediation and Environment', Swedish Institute for Administrative Research, March 1969; Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker, *The Management of Innovation* (London, 1961); Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch, *Organization and Environment* (Boston, 1967), and James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action* (New York, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> For a perceptive discussion of the problems of defining and measuring environmental properties, see William Dill, 'The Impact of Environment on Organization Development', in Sidney Malick and Edward H. Van Ness (eds.), *Concepts and Issues in Administrative Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist, 'The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments', in F. E. Emery (ed.), *Systems Thinking* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1969).

It is important to distinguish an uncertain environment from a threatening one. An organization may be in a situation of considerable dependence on environmental elements which do not share its ends, and thus be operating in a threatening environment, but at the same time the behavior of these elements may be, for example, highly predictable.

<sup>4</sup> A number of problems are not addressed here including whether uncertainty is simply a measure of the extent to which organizational members perceive an environment to be uncertain, or whether it is to be defined and measured from the point of view of the observer. Here, elements of both approaches are utilized. See Dill, 'Impact of Environment'.

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made by environmental actors as well as changes in the size of coalitions that may form to promote particular courses of action. The high level of certainty in the political environment in London was associated with the prevalence of delegation and deliberation, just as the low level of certainty in large American cities is associated with their absence.<sup>1</sup> However, as suggested, environmental properties are the starting point since the perceptions and norms that representatives and other public officials held are also crucial in explaining the characteristics of the LCC.

In attempting to characterize planning politics in London using the concepts introduced, or others that appear in the body of the study, comparisons to land use politics and general political patterns in American cities are invaluable. Indeed the comparisons helped in developing the appropriate concepts in the first place. In addition, the comparisons help to establish relationships between variables and to make judgements of 'more or less' by providing an explicit reference point. American cities are (and were) referred to both as individual cases<sup>2</sup> and for characteristics and relationships that are typical of the whole range of large, mostly older, mostly eastern and mid-western cities.<sup>3</sup>

The extent to which the characteristics of large American cities focused on in the present study are in fact typical is worth some comment. There has been a good deal of discussion about the distribution of power in American cities and how to study this matter, and some of the issues raised are pertinent here.<sup>4</sup> The arguments between the principal protagonists have pointed to the existence of two levels for the exercise of power, viz. public policy decisions themselves and what gets on the civic agenda in the first place. Taking note of this distinction, the description of decision-making in American cities as being characterized by participation of a variety of actors which is presented in succeeding chapters seems accurate. Whatever one might say about the 'meaningfulness' of participation in

<sup>1</sup> Certainty in the political environment is also associated with the orientation to complex choice problems evidenced by those concerned with LCC planning. See Chapter 7.

<sup>2</sup> The particular cities considered are New York, Syracuse, New Haven, Chicago, Minneapolis and St Paul. This reflects the extensive work done on these cities and the attention given to land use politics in the studies. See Wallace Sayre and Herbert Kaufman, *Governing New York City* (New York, 1960); S. J. Makielski, Jr., *The Politics of Zoning: The New York Experience* (New York, 1966); J. Clarence Davies, *Neighborhood Groups and Urban Renewal* (New York, 1966); Roscoe Martin, Frank Munger *et al.*, *Decisions in Syracuse* (Bloomington, 1961); Edward Banfield, *Political Influence* (New York, 1961); Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics*; and Altshuler, *City Planning*.

<sup>3</sup> Here the most useful discussion is by Banfield and James Q. Wilson, *City Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

In the main body of this study, American cities are discussed in the present tense, while for the LCC the past tense is used. This is meant to indicate that the features of the former which are analyzed are still present even though, as a matter of fact, the studies on which the analysis is based were done in the late fifties and early sixties for the most part.

<sup>4</sup> See the bibliography in Charles Bonjean *et al.* (eds.), *Community Power: A Behavioral Approach* (New York, 1971).

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many or perhaps most American cities, for both particular decisions and for the setting of the civic agenda, multiple actors are involved.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, less in the past but increasingly in the present, at both levels groups low on both a status and income hierarchy have had considerable say. They have by no means dominated nor perhaps have they been successful in promoting various schemes, but they have succeeded in blocking particular decisions and in putting a variety of problems on the civic agenda. To this extent their participation has become increasingly meaningful. Stated somewhat differently, the question of the extent of pluralism or elitism in American cities is not directly pertinent to this study. At the least, London and American cities *are* different in the directions specified here; there may however be some dispute as to how different they are, and over the normative qualities of the American situation.

It is also worth noting here that the methodology pursued in this study, viz. case studies and general interviewing growing out of them, is not open to some of the criticisms of the 'mobilization of bias' school.<sup>2</sup> One of their central arguments seems to be that looking at concrete decisions obscures the workings of this bias, i.e. the impact of the 'dominant values and the political myths, rituals and institutional practices which tend to favor the vested interests of one or more groups, relative to others'.<sup>3</sup> The appropriate reply is simply that there is no reason why a researcher cannot go from questions about how particular issues are resolved, whether they are 'key' or not, to questions such as why these particular matters were being addressed and not some others. Some researchers may not in fact raise this question, but that is hardly damning unless it is demonstrated that they somehow cannot or are much less likely to do so than researchers that utilize some other approach, and neither of these has been demonstrated. At any rate, a substantial portion of what follows the case examples in this study is in fact directed at such matters as why certain kinds of issues didn't arise and why particular groups were inactive.<sup>4</sup>

A second methodological (and theoretical) question must be briefly raised, namely the issue of comparability or equivalence. This is a major consideration in all comparative work, but perhaps especially so in comparative

<sup>1</sup> How the 'meaningfulness' of participation would be ascertained is not clear. Any suggestion that it is a matter of actors getting what they want in some more or less consistent fashion faces the problem that this probably excludes meaningful participation being very widely dispersed.

<sup>2</sup> E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York, 1960), p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, *Power and Poverty* (New York, 1970), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> The crucial (and perhaps irresolvable) issue in discussions of power structures is probably: who 'should' be interested in any particular decision, the content of any civic agenda, or any institutional arrangement. This applies to all schools equally, most obviously to the mobilization of bias scholars, but also to those who focus on concrete decisions since the latter are interested, no doubt, in who doesn't get involved as well as the former. Some exploration of why groups who might be thought to benefit from one or another resolution of an issue but who don't participate is often of considerable value. See Raymond Wolfinger, 'Nondecisions and the Study of Local Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 65 (1971), 1063-80.

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urban or local politics. Here we face not only problems of defining measurement procedures which produce equivalent readings in very different contexts, but also the question of *what* to measure. At this juncture in comparative local level analysis, empirical research, if only of a trial and error kind, is as useful a strategy as pursuing discussions of conceptual schemes and measurement problems.<sup>1</sup>

The comparison with American cities has led to a strong emphasis on what may be called the consensual dimension of London politics. Some participants who have read the analysis presented here have commented on this and have pointed to greater conflict than is indicated in the study. This reflects among other things a difference in perspective between participant and observer. However, none of those interviewed described the over-all situation as conflictual so that the emphasis derived from comparison is not markedly divergent from the views of participants. The interrelationships of the distinctions between participant and observer and conflict and consensus constitute one of the central problems of social science. Both distinctions point to the fact that the social world can only be viewed from a particular stance; it is not somehow *there*. The important thing is to be aware of the necessarily partial perspective.

## PLANNING AND RATIONALITY

The second major concern of the study grows out of the impact of the features of land use politics in London that have just been enumerated. If the LCC had few political problems which might impede its attempts to define the appropriate course of land use development<sup>2</sup>, how did it fare in attempting to do so?

If we are to consider this matter, it would be useful to be able to place the LCC within the context of planning organizations generally. In short, some definition of planning and planning organizations would be helpful. The principal difficulty to be met is to provide a definition which at the same time focuses on the logic of the planning process, as opposed to other ways of making decisions, and is also useful for studying organizations which contend that they are planning and are generally reckoned to be doing so. The task is more easily stated than accomplished since if we make planning very distinct from other kinds of decision processes, more than likely it will be found that many 'planning' organizations are not that at all, i.e. they don't

<sup>1</sup> For one attempt to define appropriate concepts for comparative urban inquiry see Stephen L. Elkin, 'Comparative Urban Inquiry: The Potential of Organization Theory', American Political Science Association, September 1972, Washington, D.C. In general, see Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York, 1970) and Robert T. Holt and John E. Turner (eds.), *The Methodology of Comparative Research* (New York, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> It also had for the most part sufficient legal authority. See Chapters 2 and 5.

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match up to the specifications. On the other hand, to simply take at face value the claim made by any organization that it is engaged in planning is not very useful if we wish to inquire into similarities and differences in such organizations; a definition which has greater empirical import is required for comparisons. The tension then is between a definition which is useful for empirical research and one which helps in defining the logic of social choice processes.

With these dilemmas in mind, planning will be defined in the succeeding discussion as the investment by an organization (or larger social unit) of a 'substantial' amount of its resources in consciously defining the policy ends it wishes to serve and the most effective means of achieving them. In the language of Chapter 7, such organizations devote considerable resources to an economizing approach. Planners then are the bureaucrats who carry the principal burden of defining such ends and means; in this approach they may make more or less use of an economizing approach. Since all organizations may be defined as purposive,<sup>1</sup> presumably all of them therefore devote *some* of their resources to defining ends and means, but clearly other concerns are evidenced as well, particularly organizational maintenance. However, planning organizations devote more resources and can perhaps in this sense be said to be more purposive than other organizations. The definition emphasizes the intellectual dimensions of the process, leaving aside the thorny question of power to implement what has been selected,<sup>2</sup> and does not focus on the extent of an organization's skill in defining ends and means. The last prevents excluding some organizations which, although they expend considerable effort in trying to define their purposes and the most effective means of serving them, do not manage to be very successful.

By concentrating on investment of resources, empirical work is facilitated since we may inquire into the extent to which such behavior is occurring. However, if we set the definition of 'substantial' too high we run into the danger noted: many organizations generally considered to be engaged in planning will be excluded. Since it is hard to see how this threshold could be established except by looking at a variety of organizations, and something like this problem attends other crucial features of planning definitions, any approach is likely to run the same or similar risks. On the other side, the concern in the definition for ends and means points to the logic of the process and suggests that town or city planning is simply part of a more general orientation to problems of collective choice.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Etzioni, *Organizations*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> For other definitions of planning see: Yehezkel Dror, 'The Planning Process: A Facet Design', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 29 (1963), 44-58; Robert A. Dahl, 'The Politics of Planning', *International Social Science Journal*, 11 (1959), 341-50; Herbert Simon, Donald W. Smithburg and Victor A. Thompson, *Public Administration* (New York, 1950), Chapter 20; and Banfield 'Ends and Means in Planning', *International Social Science Journal*, 11 (1959), 361-8.

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The definition of planning just offered points to the central issues in the succeeding analysis of the LCC's attempt to control development. As planning involves selection of ends and means, in the control of development this required the performance of two related tasks: using the system of giving permissions for development as a means to the authority's ends, and convincing applicants to accept ends additional to what they otherwise would prefer. In the event, the LCC was not a very successful advocate in its negotiations, nor very adept at using development control decisions to serve wider ends. This happened even though it was in a position to dominate the negotiations given its legal powers. The analysis of why this was the case turns on the fact that the authority was a poor economizer. The orientation to the problems of choice presented by development control and the conception of the city held by those who were mainly responsible for operating the planning machinery meant (logically meant) that they could not execute the tasks just noted very effectively.

The negotiations that grew out of the authority's attempts to convince applicants are an example of what would likely characterize any kind of comprehensive land use planning where there is a private sector. They also share features with what will transpire in situations in which land use development is in the hands of public agencies, but agencies which have considerable or complete autonomy from the reviewing authority. In short, the LCC has much in common with any land use control system likely to be developed or already in operation in both western and eastern industrialized nations. The central fact in such development control processes is, or is likely to be, that as long as those who do the actual developing are not part of the same agency which reviews development applications then the latter must not only know what it wants to see done, but must convince applicants to do it. It is argued here that the last depends on the first, at least where the planning authority already is in a position, as the LCC was, to define its ends and select its means.<sup>1</sup>

Two questions of fundamental importance are raised by the LCC's limited success in its negotiations with applicants. First, what were the consequences, particularly in terms of the distribution of benefits and costs and of criteria derived from democratic theory? These results clearly had other roots, which indeed extended beyond any factors peculiar to the planning system, so that an examination of the impact of development control must be placed in the wider context of salient features of general political patterns in London.

<sup>1</sup> In a more extended way, the ability to convince applicants is associated with certain environmental characteristics, as these affect the orientation to problems of choice that members of the planning organization, and particularly planners, bring to bear. Environments which confer advantages on planning agencies by promoting autonomy of organizational members may reduce the incentives to develop those intellectual skills required for effective negotiating; conversely such skills may develop most readily when the requisite autonomy is absent. See Chapters 5 and 7.

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Second, if the LCC didn't manage very well, can *any* organization do much better? One of the long-standing controversies in the discussion of decision-making for large collectivities is the extent to which such bodies in fact can act in a reasonably rational manner.<sup>1</sup> Although this is a particularly complex and elusive issue, as well as perhaps being the underlying concern of much of social science and public life, there is no easy way to avoid entering such risky waters in a book about planning, and so using the LCC's efforts as a springboard some general considerations will be advanced.

The principal concerns of the study, then, are captured in four questions. *How* did the London authority act, *why*, and with *what* consequences? And, is it *possible* to do any better? Chapter 2 describes the legal powers of the planning authority and provides some necessary background about the structure of government in London and about town planning. Chapters 3 and 4 are case studies which illustrate the limited citizen activity in London, the autonomy of planning officials and the difficulties the LCC had in advocacy. Readers familiar with the basic features of governmental structure and planning in London may find it possible to skip Chapter 2 (and possibly the case studies, although these are utilized in the succeeding analysis). Chapters 5, 6, and 7, discuss how and why the authority acted as it did. The concluding chapter presents an evaluation of the planning authority's efforts and examines its activities in the context of some general propositions about rationality.

## A NOTE ON THE CASE STUDIES

The use of case studies has a number of advantages, particularly in helping to capture the workings of a complex organization. Through them a whole series of relationships are suggested and it is possible to decide which are worth pursuing further in more wide-ranging interviewing and which should be best laid aside. In the same vein, cases suggest the direction of relationships and this too can be pursued in such interviews. However, the use of case studies raises the obvious question of how 'representative' or 'important' the cases chosen are. There is no easy answer to the question, but the considerations that guided the selection of the ones to present for this study can be noted.

Most often cases are chosen because of their controversial nature or because of their intrinsic interest. These criteria, which are hardly unambiguous and may not even be valid, were in fact not found to be very

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Charles E. Lindblom, *The Intelligence of Democracy* (New York, 1965); Lindblom and David Braybrooke, *A Strategy of Decision* (New York, 1963); Wildavsky, *Budgetary Process*.