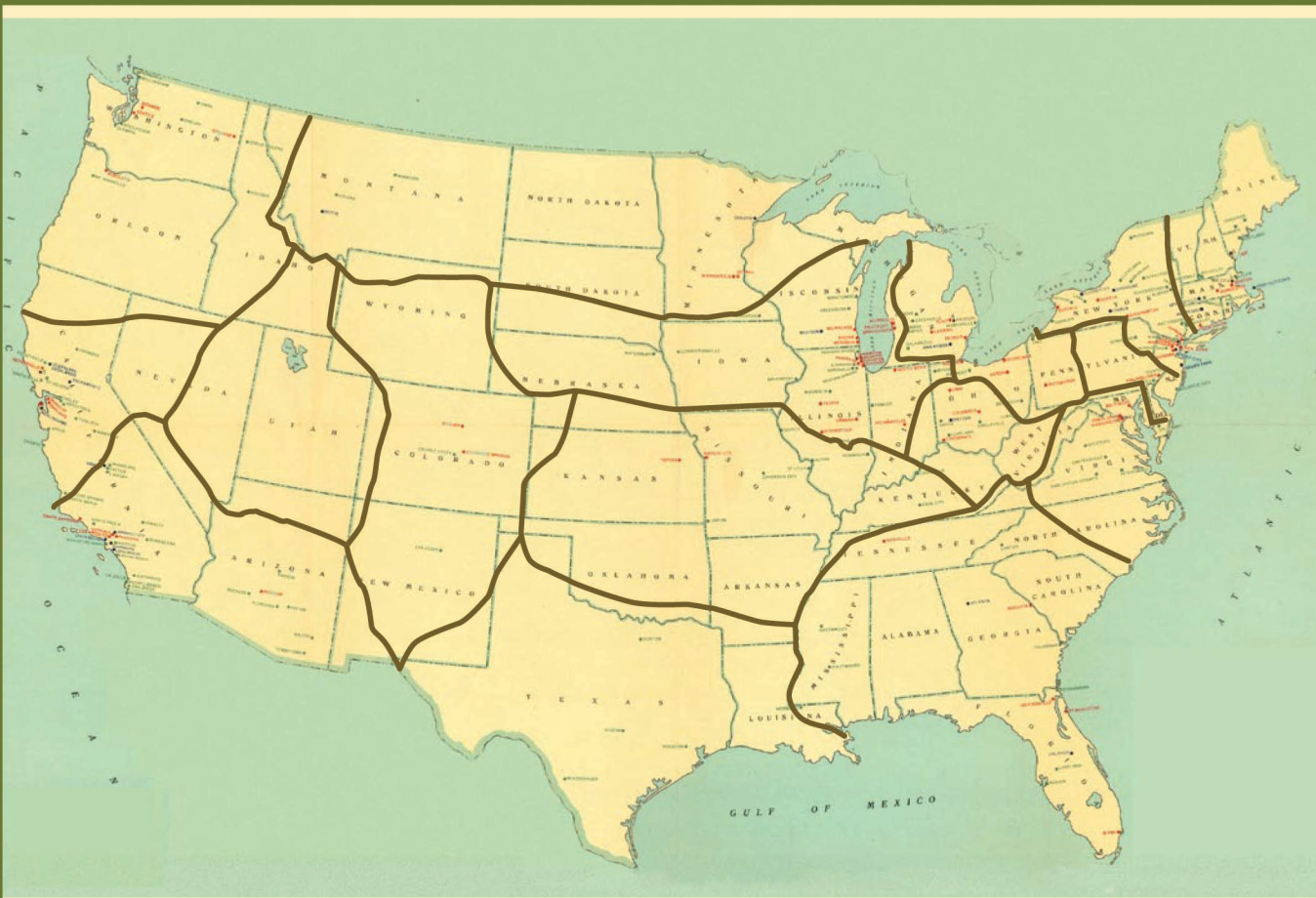


REGIONAL PLANNING IN AMERICA

Practice and Prospect



Edited by
Ethan Seltzer *and* Armando Carbonell



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 LINCOLN INSTITUTE
OF LAND POLICY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Regional planning in America : practice and prospect / edited by Ethan Seltzer and
Armando Carbonell.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-55844-215-3

1. Regional planning--United States. 2. Sustainable development--
United States. I. Seltzer, Ethan. II. Carbonell, Armando, 1951-
HT392.R4184 2011
307.1'20973--dc22

2011003403

Designed by Peter M. Blaiwas, Vern Associates, Inc., Newburyport, Massachusetts

Composed in ITC Galliard. Printed and bound by Puritan Press, in Hollis,
New Hampshire

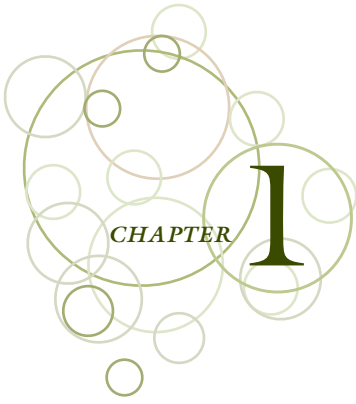
MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Cover image: Map adapted from The United Regions of America, as mapped by the National
Resources Board in 1935 to identify 16 regions for national planning purposes across the 48
contiguous states. National Resources Committee. 1935. *Regional factors in national planning*.
Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Title page image: Map of emerging U.S. megaregions, courtesy of Regional Plan Association.

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PLANNING REGIONS

Ethan Seltzer and Armando Carbonell

We live in regions—territories defined by function and only rarely by jurisdiction. The places where we work, live, shop, recreate, and socialize constitute a territory that seldom corresponds to a single town or city. Getting our food, water, and energy, quite apart from cars, computers, and tools, often involves global supply chains, and we may send our sewage and solid waste to jurisdictions and communities miles from our doorsteps.

In fact, as the earth's human population has become predominantly urban, some have argued that metropolitan regions, rather than individual cities, states, and nations, will become the keystones for both local and national economies. According to this view, competitiveness will rely on metropolitan and even megaregional networks and flows. Still, there are reasons other than economic competitiveness to employ a regional view for meeting the challenges of this age.

Sustainability and sustainable development have received an enormous amount of attention in recent years. Making choices today in a manner that does not foreclose choices for those who will follow speaks directly to those broader systems that overlap into the functional territories we know as regions. How we manage the development and use of land, energy, water, and other resources immediately calls on the overlapping territories that comprise whole ecosystems. In an interconnected, sustainable world, there is no “away” to which waste can be consigned or where unbridled extraction can take place. In a sustainable world, everything is connected to everything else, and people are called on to act accordingly.

In a perfect world, institutions for governance would match the territories within which we live. The dynamics of ecosystems, cultures, and societies would occur in territories closely aligned with one another. Concerns for present-day competitiveness or future sustainability would play out within territories where natural and social systems, and institutions for managing these shared places, would all act with respect to the same territory of interests, and the impacts of those actions and decisions would be understood and elicit responses in logical and ethical ways.

For many reasons, this kind of functional alignment is hard to find. Further, for most of us, regions are mere abstractions. We experience trust, community, and empowerment at a more human scale—the block, neighborhood, or city. Achieving the sustainability we say we seek requires bridging the gaps between the scales at which we experience place and act effectively.

Over time, as connections between places and activities change, what might have begun as a closely aligned set of systems in a shared territory loses the definition and meaning associated with a single place. We become invested in a set of institutional relationships that change more slowly, particularly for governance, and that commitment becomes capitalized as part of a political economy of place. Over time, boundaries, as inadequate as they may be or will become, are associated with property values, and changing those boundaries becomes not just a governance challenge but a profound economic challenge as well.

No matter how much sense it may make to reshuffle jurisdictional boundaries to better approximate actual patterns of daily life, those boundaries take on cultural meaning associated with values. Issues of race and class are closely associated with jurisdictional boundaries and politics throughout the United States (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001; Orfield 1997; Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2009). Proposing a change in boundaries quickly becomes an attack on long-held (though not necessarily laudable) beliefs, making institutional realignment for purposes of sustainability and economic competitiveness not just an administrative challenge, but a fundamental question of cultural change requiring the public resolution of conflicting values.

Thus we are stuck between two clear and compelling notions: on one hand the allegiance of individuals, communities, economies, and cultures to the jurisdictional status quo; and on the other the logic of better matching planning and governance to the actual scale of activities. We may live in regions, but we plan and govern through jurisdictions. The history of American urban planning over the past 100 years has largely been written as a story of individual jurisdictional initiatives.

That is not to say that serious efforts toward regional realignment have not been made. From time to time, we have attempted to change the pattern, most notably in the 1930s. However, the inertia of jurisdictional planning and the resistance to a role for regional interests has produced a less than stellar record for regional planning in the United States.

In 1933, Evelyn Brooks and Lee Brooks reviewed five years of planning literature, one of the first such reviews for this then-young field. Of 927 titles reviewed, 237 had to do with regional planning and 119 with national planning, reflecting both the challenges of the times and the ambitions for regional planning. The issues raised in their review are familiar to planners today.

It is impossible to consider regional planning apart from city planning and the details of communication, highways, airways, traffic, zoning,

and the like. It also includes the whole problem of beautification in metropolitan and rural areas where the assault on ugliness and waste is gathering momentum. (Brooks and Brooks 1933, 434)

They go on to ask, “Is there any clear evidence that regional planning is a going concern rather than a mere academic occupation?” (Brooks and Brooks 1933, 435). Their conclusion is that, indeed, the plans then in place and the trends toward metropolitan planning in both the United States and Europe combined to paint a convincing picture for the role and efficacy of regional planning. Nonetheless, they condemned what they saw as a flow of propaganda in the form of plans, constituting little more than wishful thinking on the part of vested interests and academics rather than useful and scientific planning.

Similarly, writing 40 years later, Martha Derthick (1974, 3) noted:

There has never been a sustained movement for regional organization that left its impress across the United States. Regionalism . . . is one of those ideas that grips a few minds or much of an academic discipline, as it gripped sociologists and planners in the 1930s and economists and planners in the 1960s, but then disappears for a while. It has been much subject to intellectual fad and fashion.

Derthick challenged the notion that regionalism expressed through regional planning would ever emerge as a pragmatic approach to managing the habitation and growth of urban places and regions. Why? Largely because of its history of failed attempts and her concern that regions were poor substitutes for states. If it were just a question of facts and data, regional planning would win the day. It is not, however, and never has been. Local control and the aspiration to maintain local institutions for planning and resource management are desires that are not easily displaced.

Leora Waldner (2008, 697) goes further, asserting that regional governance is meant to be ineffective, and therein lies the reason for which regional planning and (weak) governance has salience:

US regional governments are ineffectual by design, as they are given very little land-use power, no tax base, no direct representation, and no constitutional base. . . . Thus, in their role as a think tank, they may have an implied moral obligation to promulgate best practices and innovative land use policies. . . . [I]t appears worthwhile for COGs to produce these plans, despite the likelihood of repeated conformance failures.

Whether regional governance is ineffective by design or by nature, this book takes up the ongoing challenge of linking regional lives to local institutions through planning. Regionalism and regional planning make sense, but in

most cases not enough to cause us to change the ways we govern ourselves and plan and act together.

Nonetheless, a quick scan of news headlines across U.S. communities reveals a host of issues that are regional in nature. Traffic congestion is a problem in every metropolitan region in the country, and the failure of purely local approaches has led to new initiatives to reconsider past practices and craft regional solutions. Many communities in the Southeast, Southwest, and in some parts of the Midwest have encountered water supply issues that bring into sharp focus the need for better regional planning and implementation. In the Pacific Northwest recovery efforts for anadromous fish species have involved all landscapes—urban, rural, working, and wild.

Though the practice of planning in the United States has evolved to have a largely local outlook, decision makers, planners, and citizens keep coming back to regional planning because they recognize that contemporary challenges to quality of life are beyond the scope of what a single jurisdiction can manage. There is a need for planning that matches the inescapable regionalism of real patterns of daily life in major population centers. A pressing need also exists for planning that matches the scale of the systems upon which sustainability, certainly, and in some cases survival depend.

This book seeks to address the lack of a strategic and optimistic embrace of regional planning by focusing on U.S. practice and the ways that it can help to advance sustainability and quality of life. We believe that regional planning is not optional and that, like it or not, no local planning effort can meaningfully address local concerns without understanding and acting on them in a regional context. Local communities already engage regions through planning across the United States, whether intentionally or not. With the other contributors to this volume, we hope to enable decision makers and planners to make more productive and strategic use of regional planning by showing how it can respond to their desire to build a better future for their communities. This book offers a gateway to regional planning directed at the challenges and opportunities we face locally and as a nation.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY REGION?

Any discussion of regional planning, the reasons for doing it, or the way in which it gets done, has to start with a clear understanding of what we mean when we refer to a region. According to Douglas Kelbaugh (1996, 8), “*region* is an ambiguous term.” He notes that to planners it means something large, but to architects it refers to something smaller than the global international scale at which capital, projects, and contemporary ideas about architecture are developed.

In the United States regionalists in the early part of the twentieth century distinguished between regions defined as sections that are distinct from the nation or the “whole,” and regions defined explicitly by what they contributed to the

nation (Odum and Moore 1938). Politically, sections were viewed as inevitable while regions were not (National Resources Committee 1935).

Defining a region involves a combination of overlapping and interconnected characteristics along with the purposes for planning. Such characteristics can include ecological or biophysical features or systems, economic and political conditions or relationships, social and cultural traditions, or frequently, some combination of all of these. A single factor, multiple factors, multiple jurisdictions, or administrative convenience can be used to identify a region.

The fundamental principle, though, is that regions are composed of overlapping factors that together describe shared interests and dynamics. When multiple factors are involved, the overlap is most apparent at the center of the region, and least so at its edges, where the multiple territories for overlapping concerns may or may not be coterminous. This also means that regional planning occurs most often with respect to functions and relationships rather than jurisdictions. In other words, the definition of a region has less to do with determining where its outer boundary is situated, and more with creating a case for shared interests.

Defining the region is an extraordinarily important—and delicate—task. Define the region too narrowly, and dynamics essential to the success of the plan may be beyond the reach of the places and partners involved. Define it too broadly, and local jurisdictions that states and the federal government have charged with planning may view regional planning as threatening a loss of local control and autonomy.

A region defined without respect for its role in a broader world makes plan implementation a zero-sum game boxed in by old animosities and contests. Planners who define the region without respect to local and regional identity risk cutting themselves off from the essential role that this identity plays in motivating citizens and decision makers to act on behalf of the territory.

How the region is defined for regional planning, therefore, is a central planning and policy question in itself. Establishing the region's definition identifies the nature of the planning questions and the key constituents for that planning. Defining a region is not necessarily a simple or mechanical act, however. Unlike city- and other jurisdiction-based planning, regional planning lacks the institutional authority found at those other scales and occurs in and for a territory where the center is clearly identified but the edges remain fuzzy. In a world of absolute boundaries, a fuzzy edge is difficult to maintain. Douglas Powell (2007, 21), writing about critical regionalism, has stated:

Region, then, is not a thing in itself, a stable and bounded object of study. My assertion here is that just as “community” is for Raymond Williams “a warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships,” “region” is always at some level an attempt to persuade as much as it is to

describe. Because the “set of relationships” intersecting at any one point on the landscape is potentially unsummarizable by any one account, all versions of region are necessarily partial, and hence an attempt to persuade, at the very least, of the validity of their own particular definitions.

Further, the definition for a planning region used at one time may vary considerably at another. Often, it must. Because charters, specific regulatory or taxing powers, or delegations of authority from state or federal legislation sustain few regional institutions, regional planning proceeds with no guarantees for ongoing implementation, monitoring, assessment, and subsequent planning.

City or county planning speaks specifically to the relationships among community and property interests, and in so doing becomes a part of what creates and maintains property value over time. This central role in the creation and maintenance of property value ensures a continuing role for local planning that is seldom associated with regional planning in the United States.

WHAT IS REGIONAL PLANNING?

Planning, regional or otherwise, is a basic human activity. Uniquely among species, human beings have been endowed with the abilities to think about the future, sort out desired from undesired alternatives, and create strategies for choosing and advancing those futures. In this sense, planning, regardless of its scale, generally occurs through a familiar process.

Artur Glickson (1955, 11) noted, “It is obvious that Regional Planning is not an invention of our days, but a practice of old times.” Though much of what we discuss when we talk about planning in the United States is associated with the emergence of city planning in the early years of the twentieth century, Greg Hise (2009) similarly reminds us that regional planning predates those origins of city planning and is associated with the ways that the federal government contemplated national development in the nineteenth century. He notes that historic accounts of planning in America typically regard regional planning as episodic, emerging briefly from time to time and then vanishing, despite the fact that planners consistently describe their practice in regional terms. Hise makes this observation as a challenge to the way that scholars have marginalized regional planning in the American planning experience, and poses it as a challenge to our historic and current understanding of the necessary role for regional planning as an integral part of all planning.

Robert Fishman (2007), writing about the history of national planning in the United States, points out that although its citizens do not regard planning as a federal responsibility or authority, it is, in fact, an important part of the history of both the nation and its planning. He reminds us that these initiatives were regional in scale: the Gallatin Plan of roads and canals in 1808; the development of transcontinental railroads; the large landscape focus of the conservation movement; the great dam and water projects in the West; the federal

interstate highway system; and, perhaps, the development of high-speed passenger rail nationwide. They exemplify regional planning as an organizing principle at key points in U.S. history, beginning well before the practice and profession of city planning emerged here.

John Friedmann and Clyde Weaver (1979) sketch the history of regional planning in the United States as coming into its own approximately 50 years after the Civil War. In their analysis, the impacts of rapid urban industrialization, the close of the frontier, the rise of the conservation movement, and the South's persistent dependency on national support for development served as catalysts for the emergence of regional planning early in the twentieth century. They identify alternating periods of "territorial integration," the "common bonds of social order forged by history within a given place," and "functional integration"—action born of mutual self-interest—as descriptive of the swings in purpose of regional planning since that time (Friedmann and Weaver 1979, 7).

Early efforts in the period from 1925 to 1935 were characterized by the work of Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye, and other individuals, and by the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA). Friedmann and Weaver (1979) considered this the initial period of territorial integration for regional planning, which was focused on the development of a new cultural regionalism developed in harmony with the characteristics and assets of the natural landscape.

Fishman (2000) points out that this early twentieth century regional planning had a huge impact on regional planning thought and practice for the next 100 years. He describes an epic battle between the "metropolitanists," those who viewed the task to be the planning and development of urban regions in a manner that sustained the primacy of central cities and their economies, versus the "regionalists," led by Mumford and others associated with the RPAA, who advocated for the decentralization of the city and its functions. The profound city-suburb split implied in the regionalist view came to dominate metropolitan politics after World War II. Fishman concluded, however, that later in the century the subsequent synthesis of the urbanism of Jane Jacobs with the environmentalism of Ian McHarg created a new lease on life for regional planning.

Friedmann and Weaver also identify a later stage of this initial territorial integration in the years from 1935 to 1950. The earlier idealism had been tempered by politics and by the suspicion that there was something unsound if not subversive in the regionalist efforts. This period was marked by a more practical, less idealistic regionalism. Comprehensive river basin development and the scientific application of planning to problems of regional underdevelopment marked the practice of regional planning during this time. David Lilienthal (1944, xxi), director of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), described himself and his colleagues as "dreamers with shovels," who were engaged in realizing the promise of New Deal liberalism in underdeveloped Appalachia.

However, even the practical application of regional planning to problems of underdevelopment was too much for those who saw it as a threat to a political

order dominated by states and localities. In Friedmann and Weaver's assessment, the development of new spatial planning techniques and the emergence of what became known as regional science during the period from 1950 to 1975 moved regional planning even further away from its idealistic roots. Spatial systems planning and the attempted management of specific resource and capital flows became its primary tasks. Most of this activity was focused on urbanization in developing countries although, as with the TVA, some attention continued to be paid to the problems of underdevelopment in the United States and other developed nations.

Friedmann and Weaver then identify a second period of territorial integration that arose after 1975 as issues of urban sprawl, coupled with the environmental movement, led to a new interest in regional, and particularly metropolitan, planning. This is what Fishman (2000) has termed a period of new "life" for regional planning in America. The synthesis of powerful ideas gleaned from Jane Jacobs and Ian McHarg and the current literature on regional planning seem to confirm that we are continuing along this path.

In this volume, Gerrit-Jan Knaap and Rebecca Lewis identify a range of metropolitan planning efforts, which seem to be increasing in frequency throughout the nation. Smart growth (Daniels 2001; Krueger and Gibbs 2008); sustainability (Condon and Teed 2006; Haughton and Counsell 2004); equity (Clark and Christopherson 2009; Pastor and Benner, this volume); large landscape conservation (Chester 2006; McKinney and Johnson 2009); economic development (Levine 2001); rural development (Morrison 2006); and climate change (Read, Shenot, and McGalliard 2010) are on the growing list of regional planning applications being studied, discussed, and pursued in the United States. Add in the experience from Great Britain and Europe, and regional planning now is clearly a central part of planning practice.

Unlike the neat derivation of eras proposed by Friedmann and Weaver, however, it is also clear that regional planning today carries with it all of the trends and characteristics of its prior incarnations. Functional integration is clearly present in the way that regional planning is being conceived. Douglas Porter and Allan Wallis (2002), for example, examine what they call *ad hoc* regionalism—regional planning and governance efforts that arise not just in the absence of formal governing institutions, but because of a desire to avoid formal arrangements and to respond effectively to perceived threats to quality of life. Thomas Barth (2001), in fact, observes that *ad hoc* alliances are increasingly welcome because they don't have the capacity to threaten existing institutional relationships, and they exist only when acceptable to those already assured a place at the table.

Similarly, the voices of the bioregionalists, echoing Mumford, MacKaye, Odum, and the RPAA, are still with us. The arguments on behalf of habitation and planning informed by the underlying ecology of the landscape that Kirkpatrick Sale (2000) and Robert Thayer, Jr. (2003) provide would be familiar

to those early regionalists. Like McHarg (1994; Steiner, this volume), Richard Forman (2008) proposes a planning method that is based on landscape ecology and provides the same sort of blend of science and planning proposed by MacKaye (1991) some 90 years before. Rather than bringing the curtain down on one approach and welcoming another, we tend to see the whole of the U.S. experience reflected in what regional planning and regional planners address today. In this sense, there may be less distance than we think between the so-called utopian idealists of the early twentieth century and our contemporary results-oriented pragmatists.

What are the key characteristics of present-day regional planning? In any era or for any reason, regional planning starts from a unique position. Rather than encompass a territorial interest that is sharply bounded and represented (or at least claimed) by an institution that holds general governmental powers and responsibilities, it is carried out over a territory that, at least when that planning takes place, is found to share enough characteristics to assert its existence as a region. Fundamentally, rather than planning within boundaries, regional planning addresses issues across boundaries.

In fact, regional planning can be defined as planning that tackles issues that no single jurisdiction or implementing agency can address or manage effectively on its own. That is, regional planning deals with issues that occur in territories comprised of more than one jurisdiction, where interjurisdictional strategies are mandatory, not elective. As a consequence the nature of regional planning in the United States must be viewed as profoundly collaborative.

Theories about collaborative planning have been well described in recent years. Patsy Healey (2003, 116) states that it “is about strategic approaches to the governance of place.” She goes on to describe it as a means for melding different governance structures with each other in order to govern and plan for the whole effectively. Judith Innes and David Booher (2010) go further in describing a regional planning process for resource management. They conclude that informal relationships—those neither defined legally nor embodied formally in institutions—play an important role in enabling the various interests to arrive at collaborative outcomes. Formal governance structures must also interact with each other in ultimately productive ways.

T. H. Morrison (2006, 150) reviews collaborative and institutional theories and suggests that the kind of collaborative institutional behavior described by Healey, Innes and Booher, and others is “. . . not necessarily about voluntary and consensual participation but about positional relationships between actors in a network of governance. . . . [R]egional institutional integration is shaped not only by relationships of power but also by social constructions. Any integrative initiatives, therefore, will always be deeply conflicted and contested.” She proposes that planners need to proceed from a shared understanding of common circumstances rather than “manufacturing” an organization or boundary—a key principle for collaborative planning processes.

These fundamental themes from collaborative planning theory are reinforced by much of the contemporary literature on regional planning and regionalism. Matthew McKinney and Shawn Johnson (2009), in their book *Working Across Boundaries*, write about the governance gap at the regional level, where no institutions are charged with dealing with transboundary issues. Echoing the collaborative planning theorists, they point to creating a shared sense of the need for action and fashioning a collaborative path that links diverse interests in order to achieve goals in a regional setting.

Kevin Morgan (1997, 492) writes about “learning regions” that are organized via networks as means by which to overcome traditional tensions between markets and the state. “Over the past few years in particular,” he notes, “we have witnessed the spread of a new paradigm, variously referred to as the network or associational paradigm. Whatever the shortcomings of this new paradigm, it is clearly fuelled by the pervasive belief that ‘markets’ and ‘hierarchy’ do not exhaust the menu of organizational forms for mobilizing resources for innovation and economic development.”

In applying the new regionalism idea to smaller metropolitan areas, James Visser (2004, 52) writes that “new regionalism promotes regional action through governance, defined as the use of interorganizational collaboration rather than hierarchical regional government to resolve area-wide public problems.” Though he concludes that institutionally weak regionalism is unlikely to achieve new regionalist objectives for equity and participation, nonetheless it is still better and more constructive than a status quo of destructive interlocal competition.

Kathryn Foster and William Barnes (2009, 3) define regional governance as “deliberate efforts at collective action in environments of multiple governmental jurisdictions. . . . [By this definition, regional governance:]

- crosses borders, by definition jurisdictional, and also often sectoral and functional;
- is almost always a problem-solving or goal-seeking activity;
- encompasses, but is not limited to, the institutional tools that are used to establish and implement regional action;
- is not a single jurisdiction that encompasses an entire region. As a single jurisdiction, local governance would by definition not cross jurisdictional boundaries. Because no such entity exists in the United States, we exclude this option as a ‘straw man’ and a distraction in the regional governance discussion.
- is not ‘no government’ or a ‘market’ governance because that system, if it exists somewhere, would not be intentional or deliberate action. Here again, no such entity exists in the United States.”

They go on to describe regional governance as occurring through a coalition of interests.

It is tempting to describe regional planning as a collaborative enterprise simply because so few regional institutions throughout the United States are able to respond to regional needs or conditions, but defining regional planning as a transboundary exercise also necessitates a collaborative approach. Regional planning—as the management of issues or action on behalf of goals that cross boundaries in regions—must be recognized as a collaborative enterprise in which the challenges for planning and planners start with the presentation of shared concerns.

The purposes for regional planning depend on one or a combination of several motivations. Plans can arise because they are mandated; conditions require that they be made; or communities elect to create them in order to advance shared goals. In the first instance, required regional planning is most often associated with access to or the use of resources from the federal government at the local or regional level. Coordination and efficiency are often the reasons for these regional planning requirements, as exemplified by transportation planning carried out by metropolitan planning organizations.

The second reason comes into play because conditions that require regional planning are often associated with natural or man-made disasters that far exceed the boundaries of single jurisdictions. Securing adequate water resources for growing communities and economies, salmon-recovery planning in the Pacific Northwest, or efforts to create greater resilience along the Gulf Coast are examples of regional planning instigated because conditions and issues require a regional response.

Finally, regional planning may be pursued because it is the best or possibly only strategy for seeking commonly held goals. Recent examples of metropolitan planning in Portland (Oregon), Salt Lake City, and Sacramento combine elements of the first two motivations, but they also took on regional form and scale because the communities involved chose to do so.

Regional planning for large-scale landscapes, such as the Yellowstone-to-Yukon effort, often arise not because of a requirement but rather a desire to fit future planning to the scale of the resource at stake (McKinney, Scarlett, and Kemmis 2010). The utilization of regions as the basis for planning and action that will counter persistent societal inequities is another strategy being elected by those who see little progress or prospect for these issues solely on the part of local jurisdictions, particularly in metropolitan areas.

When they engage in regional planning, what do planners do in practice? To MacKaye (1991), along with more contemporary authors, regional planning emerges from the real relationships created across landscapes by people and communities. As such it offers the best chance to create a useful fit between human and nature, built and unbuilt, urban and rural, and present and future. McHarg's 1969 book *Design with Nature* integrated ideas about ecology, fitness, fit, and the pressing need to respond to global challenges into a method for ecological, regional planning that formed the foundation for much of what we know of regional planning practice today.

More recently, Innes and Booher (2010, 35) described the practice of collaborative planning in terms that directly address the networked, boundary-crossing nature of contemporary planning practice that has been advanced by Healey and others. They propose that true collaborative planning emerges from practices that elicit what they call “collaborative rationality.”

Three conditions are critical to whether a collaborative process can be collaboratively rational, productive of socially valuable outcomes, and adaptive to the opportunities and challenges of its unique and changing context. These conditions include full diversity of interests among participants, interdependence of the participants, who cannot get their interests met independently, and engagement of all in face to face authentic dialogue meeting [Jürgen] Habermas’ basic speech conditions.

Innes and Booher’s DIAD theory of planning—*Diversity* of participants, recognized *Interdependence* of interests, and *Authentic Dialogue* in the process—provides a means for articulating a theoretical basis for regional planning practice in line with our expectation that regional planning is distinguished by its boundary-crossing nature and the need for planners to be able to engage interests whose institutional context most often encourages just the opposite.

CONTEMPORARY REGIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE

The state of our world and the realities of contemporary daily life make the case for robust regional planning, and our concern here is with what regional planners actually do. With regional planning practice in the United States settling into a new century, and the challenges that face communities and institutions requiring boundary-crossing collaboration like never before, it is time to assess what we know about regional planning practice in anticipation of an approaching, new era of conscious regionalism.

Many would agree that one of the contemporary innovators for U.S. regional planning was Ian McHarg. As Frederick Steiner reminds us in chapter 2, McHarg’s work has helped to spawn much of what we now take for granted: environmental impact statements, landscape ecology, and the application of the natural sciences to a planning framework previously dominated by concerns with institutions, investment, and politics. What we now know as environmental planning and sustainable development were profoundly affected by his work. Further, as a public intellectual, McHarg’s legacy includes roles for planners that move from behind the technical and analytical tasks that, during his time, circumscribed the field.

Today, the practice of regional planning is bracketed by two key concerns: governance and participation. In chapter 3, Kathryn Foster takes up the topic of governance. She builds a convincing case for governance being the bedrock challenge for regional planning and presents governance as the means by which

autonomous actors organize and act for a shared purpose. With a disjunction between the institutional landscape on one hand and the actual landscape of activities and systems on the other, Foster identifies ways that regions have stepped up to the challenge of creating effective governance mechanisms. In her interpretation, regional planning does not necessarily take up topics different than those encountered by planners at the local or state levels. The requirement of explicitly engaging the governance dilemma, however, does make the practice of regional planning uniquely challenging. Moreover, Foster provides guidelines for effective regional planners and planning in this context and suggests that the way forward will either include changes in local powers or the creation of new regional relationships and authorities.

Continuing the theme of the disjunction between the scale for the issue and that utilized for governance, in chapter 4 Manuel Pastor and Chris Benner present the region as the proper scale at which to address and advance issues of equity in society. Particularly with the emergence of interest in sustainable development at all levels of government, new concern about social justice and equity as critical planning objectives are entering the discussion of planning practice in this country. According to the authors, equity is best addressed at a regional, often metropolitan scale, and they document the emergence of new social movements that champion regional planning for purposes of fulfilling the promise of a more equitable society. Because of its scale, however, planning at the regional level runs the real risk of becoming inauthentic. Pastor and Benner suggest ways that planners can work effectively at the regional level in order to advance equity concerns and to make real sustainability possible.

In chapter 5 Deborah and Frank Popper turn our attention to one of the longest-standing regional development efforts in the United States: that of the frontier. They review the history of the idea of the frontier and the planning that has occurred on its behalf, noting that far from having disappeared, the U.S. frontier persists and continues to be a national project. They conclude that though the nation's frontier planning is deeply flawed, working out its deficiencies could be beneficial both for the future of the frontier and for creating more effective regional development planning practice in this country. As in the preceding chapters, the authors identify the need for new institutional relationships as a critical factor going forward.

Timothy Beatley's examination of regional planning for environmental quality and management, in chapter 6, presents ideas about environmental planning and natural resources, one of the more familiar themes in American regional planning. He goes beyond notions of environmental systems and ecological planning to consider what a true green regionalism might be. Drawing on examples from throughout North America and Europe, he presents regional planning as a possible vehicle for creating the robust sustainability that is needed and often sought in communities across the country today.

In chapter 7, Gerrit-Jan Knaap and Rebecca Lewis examine the ways that regional planning is addressing the challenges of metropolitan growth management. They note that planning for growth at this scale is not new to planning in the United States and chronicle the overwhelming influence that planning for transportation systems has had on the emergence of regional urban form and metropolitan planning practice. Though they are profoundly optimistic about the emerging role for this country's metropolitan planning, particularly at this time, they warn that implementation remains an enormous challenge. Generally speaking, the interest in and willingness to plan at the metropolitan scale has yet to be matched by a widespread willingness to act as a region in order to implement those plans. The authors issue a call for institutional reforms that will enable successful planning and the effective use of plans to proceed in the decades ahead.

John Fregonese and C. J. Gabbe, in chapter 8, continue the theme of metropolitan planning and its practice by reflecting on their work to engage residents of a region in its planning. It is no easy task to engage a large, diverse group of people in planning aimed at a territory they all share but often don't recognize as being part of their community or that might be viewed as being at odds with their community. Whereas Foster presents regions and regional planning from the perspective of institutions, Fregonese and Gabbe bring it back to the scale of the household and the neighborhood. Based on their practice throughout the United States, they provide a description of what they have done to engage broad, often disinterested audiences in regional planning. Their method involves starting with an examination of values, some shared and some contested. Without grounding planning in the values and culture of the region, in all of its diversity, they believe that regional planning will almost certainly produce plans of little consequence or lasting influence.

Also on the theme of regional development and competitiveness, Robert Yaro presents the work in which he and others are engaged in order to advance the state of the art for megaregional planning, in both national and global contexts. In chapter 9 he identifies emerging national interest in high-speed passenger rail service as requiring a megaregional scale of thinking and acting. Simply stated, high-speed rail works best for trips of 150 to 600 miles, which requires planning on a scale that, though subnational, most often entails multiple states and more than one metropolitan area.

Finally, in chapter 10, we return to the questions that prompted this book:

- What makes regional planning different from other forms of planning?
- What do regional planners need in order to excel?
- How is regional planning evolving through practice?

Even though regional planning processes don't appear to be much different from those used at other scales, their context has a profound impact on the timing and strategies used to make such plans, the ways they are used, and the

skills needed by planners. We conclude with a discussion of the prospects for regional planning in the United States, particularly in the context provided by the insights contributed by the chapters' authors.

We are unapologetic fans of the regional approach and optimists when it comes to envisioning the future for regional planning in this country. Some people may suggest that being any kind of optimist with respect to regional planning is tantamount to being an idealist, but we come to this view as both planners and inhabitants of regions. Our view is grounded in practice, and we believe that through practice the challenges of effective regional planning can be worked out. It is to the prospects for the practice of regional planning in the United States and to its practitioners, now and in the future, that we address this work.

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